

## ANDREW KLOBUCAR / Moodyville: Tweet This, Digg it, Add to del.icio.us, Stumble it.

Aside from official government Web sites like North Vancouver's city site and various tourist industry portals like North Vancouver Hotel.ca or Trip Advisor.com, Moodyville's electronic presence is yet meagre. Very few of the world's digerati tirelessly tweeting, blogging or simply recording the sounds and sights of their immediate surroundings have turned their lenses, flip cams and keyboards to either of the two municipalities (district or city) legally identified as "North Vancouver." As a search term on YouTube, "North Vancouver" produces similarly scant results. The most prolific of North Van's potential videographers appears to be "Kimchiman1000," who, using a small video cam attached to his helmet, records his work emptying industrial-sized waste bins around the North Shore.<sup>1</sup> As one might expect, given the nature of the YouTube medium and its symbolic attachment to the everyday, even a topic as prosaic as waste management has its share of audience loyalty. A fairly popular effort in his ongoing series, eponymously entitled "Six Yard Can at a McDonald's in North Vancouver," provokes a number of encouraging comments, most of them probing the more technical elements of Kimchiman1000's profession. One recent commentator, for example, wants to know what kind of wage a North Van collector can expect to make (\$18-\$22 an hour). Another viewer—an actual resident of the city, or so her moniker "NVanWendy" suggests, cheerily assesses his skills behind the wheel:

"That's impressive! You actually made a left turn on Lynn Valley Road."<sup>2</sup>

Still, if Technorati's charting of popular blog activity on the Web, shown above in Figure 1, demonstrates anything, it is that the region's larger city on the south side of the Burrard Inlet continues to inspire most of the content e-pundits are keen to distribute. Technorati, based in San Francisco, is essentially a second generation or Web 2.0 search engine that not only retrieves electronically published information, but also helps organise it into distinct topic-oriented channels, while quantifying specific trends in distribution.<sup>3</sup> By providing tools of interpretation, Technorati contributes to what theorists of digital culture have called the

<sup>1</sup> Al the Kimchiman, "Kimchiman1000," *YouTube*, 11 February 2007. Video.

<sup>2</sup> NVanWendy, "Comment on Six Yard Can at a McDonald's in North Vancouver," dir. Kimchiman1000," *YouTube* (September 2008). Web.

<sup>3</sup> "Welcome to Technorati," *Technorati*. Web.

spatialisation of electronic knowledge, constructing, in effect, a kind of visual model of the constant flow of online information. Transformed into a line graph, data from Vancouver's bloggers (the top line) simulates its own mountain vista, complete with significant dips and peaks in Web bustle as enacted over the course of a single week. In comparison, the same period in North Vancouver (the bottom line) barely manages a molehill. Slight rises in activity can be seen during the 25th and over the course of the weekend of the 29th, faint pulses on an otherwise terminally flat cardiograph.

Where Vancouver's bloggers number in the hundreds, it seems only a few individuals are giving Moodyville any electronic presence. The small bump on the last weekend in March derives primarily from "live blogger" Miss604's efforts perched above the stage at the 2009 Juno awards at GM Place 28 March 2009. Miss604 is the brand name under which Rebecca Bollwitt has chosen to promote her work as a professional blogger/social media consultation service, a trade of mounting importance in the increasingly interconnected fields of social media networking and electronic journalism. "Miss604," aka Bollwitt, specialises in promoting mainstream entertainment events in the Vancouver region, using her site to host liveblogs, podcasts, Webcasts and various discussion forums. Her husband John also contributes to the profession (and accordingly Vancouver's electronic pulse) via his own blog "JohnBollwitt.com"—which that same weekend reported on the region's participation in Earth Day 2009.

As a relatively new content category on the Web, live blogging falls somewhat chaotically between the genres of street reporting and personal diary entry, between journalism and the journal, bluntly mixing the defining gestures of both formats into its own open-ended concoction. The current lack of rhetorical guidelines informing the practice of live blogging is no doubt due to its immediate origins in advances in wireless computing rather than any concerted effort to organise new literary or aesthetic objectives. We see in the liveblog, in other words, a convergence in technological formats without much critical reflection on the construction of content. Hence encountering a liveblog report tends to instill in readers the strangely mottled sensation of consuming public discourse, while having unwittingly stumbled upon several ongoing intimate conversations between strangers. Miss604 handled the Junos as one would expect any entertainment journalist to manage Canada's primary award ceremony for the music industry; the bands, the product, the wardrobes and the gossip behind them all are efficiently delivered in sound byte fashion down the centre of the blog's home page. The



margins, however, provide concurrent snatches of personal dialogue between other live bloggers at the same event, effecting a kind of meta-commentary on the very practice of live blogging while being engaged in it. One might consider such elements as secondary to the journalism inspiring them; yet, in the context of considering North Vancouver as a node on a much wider information grid, far from offering less valuable data on the event at hand, it is exactly these more intimate elements in the report that help categorise Miss604's content as especially relevant to the city. Much of the discussion and commentary on Miss604 arrives courtesy of fellow blogger Arieanna Foley, reporting on the event on her own site *Blogaholics*, which is based in North Vancouver where she lives. Foley is also a professional blogger, contributing to dozens of blogs on the Web and working as channel editor for B5Media's "Celebrities & Entertainment" selections. In this way, Foley's personal association with North Vancouver appears as one more attribute in hers and Miss604's respective event reports, an extra byte of context transcribed across networks via tagging and search terms.

Thus we find on the Web a curious echo of North Vancouver's current economic, political, and cultural relationship to its other shoreline: exurban, private, marginal—in short, primarily a source of commentary to the principal database we symbolically identify as the city of Vancouver. The very fact that a single set of location-based tags can affect the overall electronic presence of a particular community testifies to the general lack of online content being produced there. When no one is chatting in a set room, a single voice can seem almost overbearingly loud. On the other hand, the activity of live blogging categorically opens up new connections between information topics and some of the material or technical factors informing their distribution—allowing any and all smaller communities more potential agency in their own representation and subsequent interpretation. Just as technological advances in typography contributed historically to the evolution of constructivist and concrete-style experiments in modernist poetry, developments in information technology appear poised to transform just how information itself is to be defined. Meta-tags in content remind us that the verbal message in an electronic document, the one appearing on screen before our eyes, provides just one layer of interpretation among many. The code, the scripts, the myriad visual, aural and tactile elements that make up a digital work evoke a much more dynamic, phenomenologically complex textual experience; and therein lies Moodyville.

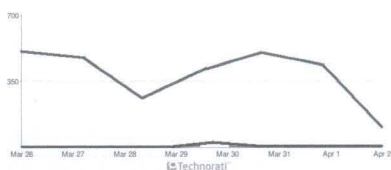


Figure 1. Technorati Chart for Blog Activity on North Vancouver Week of 25 March to 2 April 2009.

