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Comparing Tumblr and Posterous

JUNE 16, 2011 BY [KARMA](#) 19 COMMENTS



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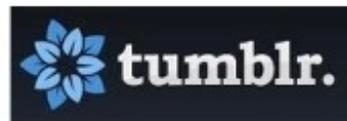
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VERSUS



 Today, 40Tech is pleased to present a guest post by Karma.

You suave and debonaire 40Tech readers likely know all about microblogging. If you like the ease of sharing things through Facebook and Twitter but wish you could post longer entries with more formatting, Tumblr or Posterous might be what you need. Alternatively, if you want to start a blog but have been overwhelmed by WordPress, Movable Type, or Blogger – Tumblr and Posterous are a dream come true. Posting to both sites allows all the standard features of a blog post: you can toggle between rich text and HTML, customize your theme, split your entries into multiple pages and alter the formatting. However, these sites are [taking the lead over traditional blogging platforms](#) because it is much easier to get up and running. They also have some features that leave those other blogging sites in the dust.



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 By Daniel Gold

TITLE

Some Predictions About Books By Way of Some Predictions About Music

There's been a lot of talk lately about the "future of publishing." After all, books have never had as much cash to spare as the recording industry, and look at the mess they're in. Already it is not so difficult for a self-published manuscript to sell itself on Amazon.com. What will happen when everything goes digital? The suggestion is that there will be an opening of the gates, and the latest best-seller will stand on the same virtual shelf with thirty self-published manuscripts. The optimists claim that this is where the great unpublished books will be discovered and publishers pore to the unleashed masses of poorly thought-out, half-written tomes filled with spelling errors. But it doesn't matter if fantastic self-published books are available if they're drowned out by countless other books vying for the consumer's attention.

I'm thinking of this issue again because Chuck Wendig just wrote a post on this very subject. I must quote a quote that he included in his piece from a Salon.com article ([When Anyone Can Be a Published Author](#))

Furthermore, as observers like Chris Anderson (in "The Long Tail") and social scientists like Sibeana Iyengar (in her new book "The Art of Choosing") have pointed out, when confronted with an overwhelming array of choices, most people do not graze more widely. Instead, if they aren't utterly paralyzed by the prospect, their decisions become even more conservative, zeroing in on what everyone else is buying and grabbing for recognizable brands because making a fully informed decision is just too difficult and time-consuming. As a result, introducing massive amounts of consumer choice leads to situations in which the 10 most popular items command the vast majority of the market share, while thousands of lesser alternatives must divide the leftovers into many tiny portions.

Chuck says in response, "that doesn't sound like what will happen when the FUTURE OF PUBLISHING is made manifest. It sounds like what happens right bloody now."

As it is, there are about 100,000 brand new titles published and printed every year, and it is fair to say that even the most devoted readers may touch 1/1000th of that. That doesn't take into account the thousands of reprints of absolute classics that exist. I am pretty sure that if I devoted my entire life to reading I would not get through every book on my imaginary wish list before I breathe my last breath. Now imagine compounding this with an onslaught of unpublished manuscripts, from gorgeous to garbage, that would land on the market place if the result of this revolution were a

tags: books, crowd sourcing, digital books, future, music, publishing, radio, recording industry

July 05, 2010 at 1:01 PM

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What They Have Common

The first and most important thing Posterous and Tumblr share is this: it is ridiculously easy to start a new blog. All you have to do is click on a button, give it a name and you are ready to dive in. You don't even have to commit to a name because you can easily change both the name and url of your site at any time. This has affected the culture of Tumblr because there are so many one-off sites. For example, when Arcade Fire won a grammy, someone started a tumblog called [Who is Arcade Fire](#), which posted examples of angry fans complaining about this band they'd never heard of. This sort of site that is incredibly timely and focused on something very specific is common on Tumblr. If you've ever had a crazy idea for a site but thought it would be too much work to set up a whole new blog, you may want to use Tumblr for it. Such are the things [book deals are made of](#)

If using your own custom domain is a sticking point, don't worry as both sites support it. You can also have custom pages, other than your blog (e.g. Links, About, etc.). Perhaps you are concerned about making sure content plays nice with your smart phone. Posterous has a nice clean interface on my Android; Tumblr's is damn sexy – though Tumblr's currently has a bug that will only let you post to your main blog. If your phone isn't fancy but does have email, you can use Posterous to post by email (more on that later).

With either site it is dead simple to take a picture with your phone and have it up on your site in no time, and both sites allow you to post content at a later date. This is a great way to keep content fresh and not overwhelm your readers. For example, on my hyperlocal site, I have a "hooptie of the month" picture. I actually posted all of the pictures at one time, but they only show up on the dates I've scheduled—shh! Don't tell! This encourages Tumblr to have shorter posts: why post all ten hoopties from the car show, when I can get twelve posts out of it?

The advantage with Posterous is that they actually support formatting the date in a multitude of ways, so you could type 12/22/12 or Dec. 22 2012 and it will figure out what

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you mean. Tumblr has only one format and they don't tell you what it is, so I'm often left scratching my head trying to figure out how they want it typed. However I think Tumblr wins because they have a queuing option. Just click "Add to my queue" and it will wait to post that item for a few hours. You may customize the queue so that queued posts go up at a certain time, or you may rearrange the order they will post.



Finally, if you want to have a group site or accept submissions from the masses, both sites will make the process easy for you and your users. In the next section, we will get into the gritty on where each of these sites truly shines.

In Favor of Posterous

Post by Email

embedded through other sites or links to songs posted on your own server, just what they hold onto for you. Also remember that you could post ten songs and queue them to post at different times in the week. But if you're determined to post five songs every day, this could be a factor. In Posterous, you may upload 100 MB, regardless of what the content is. At that size, you're more likely to be limited by your email provider (though you can still post via the web).

Import Your Existing Blog

If you already have an existing blog that you'd be switching from, this could be the deal-breaker on Tumblr. It's easy to switch to Posterous because you can use their import feature to bring in all the posts you wrote on some other site, whether that site be Ning, Tumblr, TypePad, WordPress, ActiveRain, TwitPic, Blogger, or Movable Type.

Private Blogs

While you can set certain posts to be private, only in Posterous can you make the whole blog private. You could start a blog for your family reunion, for example, that only members of your family can see. Tumblr is very much about their community, so it is understandable that their site is not designed for this functionality.

Autopost



Autopost is the feature that has me devoted to Posterous. Ever known someone that

somehow manages to post all their content everywhere? Ever wish you could post once and have everything go to all your sites? Sure, there are other sites that will automatically send your blog to Facebook and Twitter. But with Posterous, you can set it to automatically send the pictures in your blog Picasa and Flickr. That concert footage you just blogged will automatically post to your YouTube account. Most importantly, you can autopost to your own domain. And you can do this all by sending one email.

Recently I noticed that the pictures and music I autoposted weren't displaying with the pretty formatting I mentioned above—no nifty music player or picture gallery, just a long string of pics and an icon that says "click to listen on Posterous." The issue was only on sites where I autoposted; it showed up on Posterous fine. I could understand if they did this deliberately, to drive traffic back to Posterous blogs. I emailed them to ask if this was a permanent change or if it was a bug and they wrote back, *"Thanks for the report, we've been responding to changes in the autopost destination's API, and are working hard to maintain/restore the functionality you're used to."* This is critical, as it would be unacceptable to have my main blog look like a duplicate site that redirects to a Posterous blog! Hopefully they will have this resolved soon. In the meantime, Autopost is still a terrific feature that will increase your productivity if you use a lot of sites. Isn't Posterous swell? But Tumblr has a few tricks up their sleeve too. In the next section, we'll dive into those.

In Favor of Tumblr

More Themes

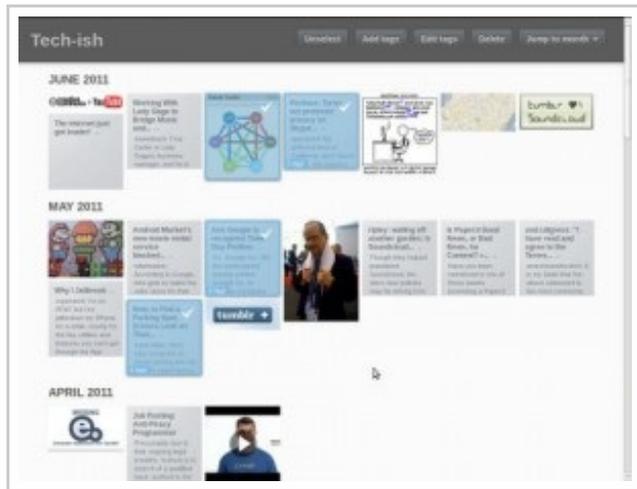
Posterous only offers a few themes to dress up your website. The ones they have are shiny and flawless, but for sheer quantity they can't compete. If you like to change your design every few months, [Tumblr has 869 to choose from](#), if you are one of those people that abandoned Myspace for Facebook for design reasons, Tumblr will have you writing love notes in no time. The themes are gorgeous and, unlike Facebook, pictures and video display full size, just like they should. Posterous also displays content full-sized, but it is the next feature that makes Tumblr themes even finer to look at.

Interesting Page Layout



On Posterous, like other sites, a post is just a post. On Tumblr your post will fall into a particular category: audio, video, chat, quote, text or link. Each of these will display differently on your page, creating a more diverse layout. Creating a “Chat” post will display text in different colors for each speaker while “Quote” will make the text extra large with giant quotes around it. This creates some limitations, as it would be pretty difficult to post a video clip in a Chat post, but most of these can easily be gotten around. Ironically, most of these fancy trappings will be lost on the people who come to your site within Tumblr, as they only see your posts via they’re stream. Still, it’s a nice touch for those landing from Google.

Mass Post Editor



Say you have a blog about concerts you've been to and it only just now occurred to you that all of these posts should be tagged "music." No problem, you can use the Tumblr mass editor to tag multiple blogs at the same time. Since the editor shows thumbnails, it's also a good way to see several months' content at a glance.

"There's An App For That"

Because Tumblr is so popular, there are a ton of third party apps, widgets and customizations. There's one that will play all the music on your page. There's one to record and share voice notes. There's one that lets you add speech bubbles and quotes to your photos. There's one to post animated gifs from your iPhone directly to Tumblr. There's one to turn your tumblogs into a printed magazine. There's one turn your posts into an Advent calendar. There's even one to browse Tumblr as a video game, though for the life of me I can't figure out how it works (which is probably for the best!).

RSS Import

Using this feature, Tumblr can automatically post any photos that show up on Flickr onto your tumblog. It can import your other blog posts as links or links with a short preview. You can import multiple feeds, which would theoretically allow you to post all kinds of stuff without even logging into Tumblr regularly. Essentially, it is like the opposite of Posterous' Autopost: one exports your content to other sites, while Tumblr's feature is about automatically bringing content from elsewhere into your blog.



Saved Searches

In Posterous it is possible to search the content on their community but in Tumblr you can save those searches. For example, I have a saved search for “San Francisco” that I use to find content for my local blog. This is great because it gets you out in the virtual community, rather than reading and reposting from the same blogs over and over.

Devoted Community

Speaking of community, Tumblr's is addictive. Tumblr is growing at an explosive rate and it's getting a reputation with all the right people. While even the dusty hat shop in Nowheresville has a Facebook page, you can count on your favorite magazines and blogs to proudly display their Tumblr badge. This, more than anything else, is what Tumblr offers: a place to share your stuff with a community that just can't get enough of Tumblr—and if you're on Tumblr, that means you.

Even layout is community focused. Posterous conveniently emails your subscriptions, where they can be ignored as just another list-serve. Tumblr treats your subscriptions more like a social network by putting your followers' posts on your homepage. Because of this it is very hard not to peek at what is posted there before going on to post your own content. For every post I write, I tend to “reblog” five or ten of someone else's, because whenever I login there are ten posts staring back at me, batting their eyelashes, begging to be read.

Part of this is just sheer numbers: Posterous may be the 474th most popular website in the world, but Tumblr is kicking them in the tush at number 48. But it's something more than numbers too: Tumblr is that rare commodity in that, unlike social networks, its users are eager to break away from the circle of blogs they know. When you are too tired to write a blog post and just want to look at funny comics/political infographics/gifs of cute kittens, Tumblr will be there for you.

But I hear you saying, "*Kittens! Bah! I only care to post my own content!*" First: your loss, as link sharing will get people coming to your site. Second: if what you want is to get strangers to read your finely crafted prose, Tumblr may be just the magic you need. I only post every other week, but in the year I've been using both sites, 88 people have begun following my tumblogs. When I'm actively posting, I get one or two new followers every week. From Posterous? Six. Ever. All together. Their SEO is strong, but the odds of Posterous users discovering your content within the site is not. It's as simple as this: if you post quality content on Tumblr, you will get new followers.

The Big Picture

In the end, Tumblr and Posterous aren't that similar after all. Tumblr's audience slants younger and hipper and the single-item format encourages posts that are short and snappy. Thus, if you want to write about trendy new bands, share photos, comics or graphs, Tumblr is the best choice. If you want to be a part of a blogging community, definitely go with Tumblr. It's flashier with more fun tricks, thus it's a good pick if you're the type to own a Helvetica t-shirt and a first generation anything.

Posterous is focused more on functionality, so it will probably appeal more to practical folks who see their blogging software as a tool to be used and nothing more—and in that respect, it excels. If you want to post long multimedia entries or if you have an established audience that isn't trying to gather new eyeballs, I'd recommend Posterous. Or, you could be like me: Post all your original content to Posterous and have it autopost to Tumblr. This way you can have the best of both worlds.

Which is your favourite?

 Karma is a blogger from Oakland who blogs about many things, and loves music

like. Seriously. Loves it. You can find her as a top 10 DJ on [Blip.FM](#), or on [Future is Fiction](#), one of her many blogs.

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About Karma

I am a freelance writer and publicist in Oakland, CA. My tech-only site is <http://tech-ish.com>. I also write about music, politics and culture. For some reason people seem to like my taste in music: I have 41,000 followers on

the music site Blip.fm. My homepage is futureisfiction.com.

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19 Responses to "Comparing Tumblr and Posterous"



Daryl

June 17, 2011 at 4:58 am

[Reply](#)

Karma – great first post & I love your style.

Good topic too – I've just started a tumblr blog having been wanting to blog *something/anything* for ages but don't have the time to write lengthy well thought out pieces on one topic. Tumblr appealed because of the variety of post formats, ease of posting, etc.

I've found that it's worth taking a bit of time playing with some of the formats and options, to see what works best for me, and it's been enjoyable so far.

As you say, I can also start several different blogs /easily/ so I can comfortably post on my widely-different areas of interest with ease.

Hope to hear more from you @40Tech!



Karma

June 17, 2011 at 1:30 pm

[Reply](#)

Thanks Daryl!

It's funny how the set up of Tumblr encourages shorter posts. Some dismiss it for that but I think it just makes the site more addictive. It's faster to read, and faster to post. Bite-sized news makes me think:

“Just one more...”



Vivian

June 17, 2011 at 3:32 pm

[Reply](#)

As a posterous blogger, your review caught exactly what I love about the service – it lets me blog by email, without thinking about the platform at all. And then lets me autopost with that simple ‘send’ click. I don’t need much in the way of what tumblr’s strong in: My blog isn’t directed to short, snappy and hip, so really doesn’t fit in tumblr’s niche. Bottom line though, they are both great services, directed to different users.



c0up

June 19, 2011 at 6:48 am

[Reply](#)

I spent a good hour trying to find the RSS import feature on a newly created Tumblr blog; turns out they’ve scrapped that option... you should probably update the post.



Jamie

June 19, 2011 at 10:00 am

[Reply](#)

One aspect of Posterous that tipped the scales for me is their group capabilities. Any site can have multiple authors or contributors – this combined with the ease of posting has given my family sites a whole different type of community where everyone can send in photos and comment on them.

Posterous also sends out the full content of your posts via email so everyone is updated instantly without having to visit your site.

Thanks for a great post – I've bookmarked it and will send to my friends the next time they ask!



Karma

June 21, 2011 at 4:39 pm

[Reply](#)

@c0up Interesting, I noticed that they updated the layout so I checked to make sure the feature was there when I wrote the post last week. But you're right, I can't seem to find it now. I am in contact with Tumblr's tech support now. I'll update you soon.

Karma's last post ..[Comparing Tumblr and Posterous](#)



Karma

June 21, 2011 at 5:10 pm

[Reply](#)

@c0up It was strange because some of my blogs had the import RSS option and others didn't. Customer support wrote back to me very quickly. Here's what they had to say:

Hi Karma,

In order to conserve our resources, Tumblr is no longer supporting feed imports on blogs that have not already imported feeds in the past. We deeply regret any inconvenience that this may cause. But, this change will allow us to focus our resources and energy on other useful Tumblr features.

Sorry we can't be more help,

Renee



c0up

June 21, 2011 at 5:41 pm

[Reply](#)



@Karma wow, that seems like such a cop out... I wonder if they'd at least go into more detail about what these "resources" are that become so heavily expended when RSS importing occurs.

Thanks a lot for looking into it though!



Bobby Travis

June 27, 2011 at 12:24 pm

[Reply](#)

This was a fantastic first post, Karma! Thanks for the great research and insights into both services. Ultimately, I would have to agree with your assessment. I've used both, and still have accounts on both services. For easy marketing engagement and quick photo and interest sharing posts, I definitely tend to angle toward Tumblr. Posterous is great for content-focused posts — though I find that my content posts tend to end up on wordpress blogs more often than not.



Patty

June 28, 2011 at 4:33 am

[Reply](#)

I am so old I have blogged ect. and didn't know it until I had done it SEVERAL TIMES..sad but true...keep writing I will continue to read Thanks Karma.....Patty



oranges

July 6, 2011 at 3:45 pm

[Reply](#)

hello world



Jon Strang

July 12, 2011 at 4:24 pm

[Reply](#)



Thanks for this thorough review. It helped me to decide to stick with Posterous!



Agus Iskandar

December 14, 2011 at 12:41 am

[Reply](#)

Thanks for the great review on Tumblr and Posterous. Reading your review made me realize why I fell in love in the first place with Posterous. Its simplicity, ease of use and autopost feature.



e réputation

February 10, 2012 at 8:36 am

[Reply](#)

which has better e-reputation?

e réputation's last post [..Une approche globale de gestion de l'e-réputation](#)



knev

April 23, 2012 at 9:38 am

[Reply](#)

Thank you for showing this steps on Tumblr which was new to me

knev's last post [..Microsoft Office 2010 Clipboard Problem or Office 2010 copy and paste not working](#)



David

June 12, 2012 at 7:19 am

[Reply](#)

I used posterous to create my site and it is fantastic !!

David's last post [..Folckore: San Juan \(St. John Eve\)](#)

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