

Style and Substance: The Information Seeking Behavior of Fashion Bloggers

**Kimberly Detterbeck (Purchase College, SUNY)
Nicole LaMoreaux (Fashion Institute of Technology, SUNY
and LIM College)
Marie Sciangula (Purchase College, SUNY)**

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ABSTRACT

In this report, the myMETRO Researchers Fashion Blogging Team investigates the information seeking behavior and research methods of fashion bloggers. An online survey and online email interviews were conducted in order to find out how fashion bloggers find, use, and interact with information and information professionals. Based on our research, we posit three observations about the information seeking behavior of fashion bloggers:

1. the importance of appearing authentic and knowledgeable discourages bloggers from consulting information professionals for research assistance;
2. the majority of fashion bloggers tend to access and use information in a manner characteristic of millennials. This along with blogging's inherently fast-paced nature stymies in-depth research;
3. fashion blogging hinges on information sharing among bloggers and other online sources but a fair and consistent standard of citation has not been established

Going forward, additional research is warranted on a number of related topics: fashion bloggers as compared to "traditional" journalists, fashion bloggers as millennials, and fashion blogs-to-books publishing.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The myMETRO Fashion Blogging Team would like to extend our gratitude to Ms. Pamala Gomes (of www.addikted2fashion.com) for being our fashion blogger insider and guiding us through the fashion blogosphere. We would also like to thank Tom Nielsen and METRO for organizing this pilot project and supporting our research through its many ups and downs. Finally, we would like to thank the fashion bloggers who took the time to participate in our survey. The report could not have existed without their thoughtful and generous feedback. Finally, we would also like to acknowledge the work of Eleanor Snare whose dissertation provided the ideal foundation upon which to build our own research.

INTRODUCTION

Investigating the information seeking behaviors and research methods of particular populations is a well-established practice in librarianship. For example, one can easily find studies on how chemists look for information, how art historians do (or do not) use librarians, or how lawyers engage with research and resources. Building off of this theoretical model, we, the myMETRO Fashion Blogging Team, chose to investigate the research behaviors and methods of fashion bloggers. As per the description of the pilot project, we chose to study fashion bloggers because it is a population not traditionally associated with libraries nor traditional research methods. We saw this as an opportunity to reach out to individuals who don't necessarily view themselves as researchers or have any relationship with librarians or information professionals. Most library literature on blogs is concerned with two things: "how libraries can use them as communication or marketing tools for their library, and how librarians are using them as information resources for their own professional knowledge" (Eades, 2011, p. 12).

In contrast, our report focuses on the creation of blog posts and the information needs and gathering methods required for said creation. The premise of our study was to find out how bloggers function as researchers and knowledge creators. The research we conducted, via surveys and email interviews, aims to shed light on this process, albeit on a small scale, and helps to assist other librarians who may work with and/or serve this particular user group. The intended audience of this report will likely be librarians, information specialists, archivists and other researchers serving and working with the fashion industry.

For the sake of this report, we recognized the accepted definition of a blog as "a contraction of the words 'web' and 'log.' Blogs are internet sites on which individuals regularly publish their thoughts on a particular subject." Blogs are comprised of individual posts, often displayed in reverse chronological order, and often contain text, images, video, and music (Rocamora, 2011, p. 408). Fashion blogs are one subset of blogs that focus on fashion and style. Fashion blogs generally encompass three sub-genres (or types): street style ("blogs that highlight the 'best' of street fashion by capturing and posting photographs online"), personal style (bloggers post pictures of themselves documenting their style"), and commentary and coverage of the industry's events, news, and shows (Leung, 2011, para 3 & Rocamora, 2011, p. 407).

LITERATURE REVIEW

For the purposes of this report and research study, we limited the scope of literature consulted and included in our literature review. We honed in on literature from library and fashion publications that specifically discuss how fashion bloggers find and use information. We purposely avoided literature on blogging and bloggers in general as to stay within the limited scope of our investigation. We also steered clear of literature on the broader fashion industry as fashion bloggers are a unique subgroup. We gathered background information from journal articles, interviews, conference keynote speakers, and books published by some of the more prominent fashion bloggers of the world.

Much of the literature, both scholarly and popular, about fashion blogging has focused on consumption (how the reader interacts with blogs, finds blogs, etc.); how fashion blogging relates to traditional fashion journalism; and the growing incorporation of bloggers into various sectors of the fashion

industry.¹ Very little scholarship focuses on the creation of fashion blogs from the bloggers' point of view--what goes into making a post or an entire blog; what type of research, if any, fashion bloggers conduct; and how fashion bloggers obtain and use information for the creation of their blogs. Even less literature exists on fashion blogs in library literature. What does exist focuses on how blogs serve as information sources for library patrons not on the blog creators themselves and on library resources for fashion students and faculty. The oft-cited article "Inspiration and Information: Sources for the Fashion Designer and Historian" by Gaye Smith (1989) comes closest to what we hope to achieve. Smith outlines where fashion designers and historians look for information and inspiration, emphasizing the importance of serials and magazines for following fashion trends and seeking visual information. Fashion bloggers seek some of the same information. Smith alludes to predictions of style, market trends, and visual sources of creative inspiration in her study. Vivienne Eades' article "Fashion blogs: too trendy for libraries or useful resources?" offers a justification for fashion blogs as a legitimate source of information for fashion students. While Ms. Eades does not look at fashion bloggers as a user group, the information seeking behaviors she describes for fashion students might be just as relevant for fashion bloggers as they can be, in some cases, one in the same.

In conducting our literature review, we found three notable researchers investigating fashion blogs and bloggers: Alice Marwick, Agnès Rocamora, and Eleanor Snare. Alice Marwick, a postdoctoral social software researcher in the Social Media Collective at Microsoft Research New England, studies online identity and consumer culture. Specifically Ms. Marwick investigates social status and conspicuous consumption online as demonstrated by fashion bloggers. In her presentation "Conspicuous and Authentic: Fashion Blogs, Style, and Consumption" Ms. Marwick provides a succinct summary of the fashion blogging universe which provides macro level context to our study. Although the bulk of her presentation focuses on how fashion bloggers exemplifies conspicuous consumption in the 21st century (a topic not immediately relevant to our investigation), her research does expound upon topics that inform the analysis of our survey results such as the importance of authenticity or perceived authenticity to the success of blogs and recognition of style curation as a valued and legitimate skill.

Also studying the practices and social impact of fashion bloggers is Eleanor Snare, who completed a dissertation on the relationships between fashion bloggers, the fashion industry, and contemporary social structures at the University of Leeds in 2011. Ms. Snare's research focuses on fashion blogs as "an important element of the contemporary fashion commodity chain" (p. 2). Her paper explicates the many tasks fashion bloggers undertake in order to run a successful blog, which serves to inform their information needs and practices. It should also be noted that Ms. Snare also uses empirical knowledge as gleaned via an online questionnaire, i.e. survey. Like us, Ms. Snare polled fashion bloggers on what they do although she did not explicitly ask them about how they conduct research or look for information.

Most notable and relevant to our study is the work of Agnès Rocamora, Senior Research Fellow and Senior Lecturer in Cultural and Historical Studies at University of the Arts London. Ms. Rocamora has written extensively on fashion blogs as a new media and interplay between fashion blogs and tradition fashion journalism as evidenced in magazines and newspapers. Ms. Rocamora's 2012 article "Hypertextuality and Remediation in the Fashion Media" was especially enlightening since it discusses some of the practices that go into creating blog posts. Ms. Rocamora explains that posts, fashion blog posts in particular, are often comprised of a series of links to other web material. This linking not only

¹ Please see Alobaidat (2009), Claire (2009), Corcoran (2006), Dodes (2006), Grauel (2009), La Ferla (2008), Pham (2011).

makes up the content of the blog but also serves as the most basic and most accepted form of citation in the blogosphere. The author also explains the transient nature of blog post creation and the post themselves; like much of the Internet's content, blog posts are expected to be created and consumed quickly. Fashion bloggers are expected by their readers to create hyper-up-to-date content, increasingly involving "live blogging" e.g. writing about an event in real-time. Rocamora also develops the idea of "expert paradigm" or the shifting notion of expertise in light of user-generated content. The expert paradigm plays into how fashion bloggers develop content for their posts and informs their information seeking methods.

METHODOLOGY

Fashion blogging, like all blogging, has grown exponentially. According to Blogger.com, slightly more than 2 million bloggers, as of July 2010, were classified as being "with an industry of fashion" (as cited in Rocamora, 2011, p. 409). While we would have loved to survey all 2 million of those fashion bloggers, we realized that we needed to identify a more manageable research population with which to work. A fashion blogger colleague, Pamala Gomes, directed us towards the professional fashion blogging network Independent Fashion Bloggers (IFB). IFB, founded in 2007, has a community of about 3,000 registered users, all of whom must have an independent fashion website in order to participate as a member. With both well established and emerging bloggers represented in IFB's membership, along with (what we perceived as) easy avenues to member communication, we determined that IFB provided an ideal research population.

We took a two-fold approach to gathering information about fashion bloggers' research methods. First we distributed a public survey using a Google form: <http://goo.gl/x4Ji8>. The survey questions explicitly asked bloggers what information they need to write posts, where they find that information, and how they would utilize the expertise of an information professional. Also included were demographic questions and details about their specific blog. We constructed the questions as simply as possible, avoiding words like "research," "methodology," "library," and "citation" as these terms do not resonate with fashion bloggers and would probably discourage participation in the survey. Pointed and directed questions allowed us to extract the information seeking methodologies of fashion bloggers without using explicit "library" jargon. We also included a question asking participants if they would be willing to be contacted for follow-up questioning.

The largest challenge we faced by far was distributing the survey and soliciting responses. Our initial method was to approach Jennine Jacob (née Tamm), IFB's founder and site administrator, in hopes of having the survey mentioned and/or linked to from IFB's homepage. What we realized and what we continued to experience, was that fashion bloggers, especially those at the level of Ms. Jacob, are saturated with a variety digital communications (emails, texts, Tweets, Facebook messages, etc). In this message rich environment, it was impossible to stand out among the crowd of emails Ms. Jacob receives daily and thus we never received a response.

Realizing that we would not enjoy the wide exposure that having a presence on IFB's homepage would grant, we explored other avenues of disseminating the survey. A large channel of distribution was through social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Tumblr, LinkedIn, and the IFB member discussion board. The aforementioned fashion blogger colleague, Pamala Gomes, is a member of the IFB community and offered to post a link to the survey on IFB's many discussion forums on our behalf. Her insight was invaluable when communicating with fashion bloggers because of her direct

involvement with and membership in IFB. In order to make the survey attractive to fashion bloggers, Ms. Gomes advised us to make our marketing of the survey look like a typical fashion blog post, i.e. more images, less text! To that end, Ms. Gomes created an infographic for the survey using Polyvore, a social fashion and style community website.



Figure 1: myMETRO Fashion Blogging Team Survey Logo

The image evolved to become the logo of our project and the main mechanism for marketing, especially on social media sites. Finally, we sent targeted emails to fashion bloggers featured in the publication, *Style Diaries: World Fashion from Berlin to Tokyo* by Simone Werle, an international fashion blog directory. In all of our marketing communication, The Fashion Blogging Team struggled with finding a balance between coming across as professional yet approachable; we discovered that the world of fashion blogging is an informal and collegial one. In an effort to be taken seriously and to not be perceived as “spam” or “pitches,” the tone of our communication with fashion bloggers was initially perceived as too formal and thus blatantly interpreted as outside their community. The image created in Polyvore certainly helped mitigate the disparity and bridge a gap between academic librarianship and fashion blogging but ultimately our survey suffered from a lack of exposure. As we are not part of this community, we did not have a direct nor far reaching pipeline to the fashion blogger membership.

In light of our shift in perception, we adjusted the tone of our direct communication to bloggers; we took a more informal and relaxed tone when using social networking tools and sending emails. The survey went live March 2012 and stayed active until the end of April. During that time, we received 31 responses, 19 of whom indicated that we could contact them for a follow-up interview.

Recognizing that the information needs and seeking behavior of fashion bloggers is probably too nuanced to be completely described a 20-question survey, we included the question about follow-up contact. We hoped to conduct in-depth interviews with the individual fashion bloggers who showed interest in being contacted further. We composed eight additional questions, two of which were individualized to the blogger’s survey responses. Through these questions, we hoped to gain detailed insight into how the information gathered was used and how fashion blog posts are created. The initial survey sought to have respondents identify information needs and information acquisition. The follow-up questions aimed to address the use of information to create new knowledge, i.e. blog posts. After repeated emails, we have only received one answer to our follow-up interview request.

RESULTS

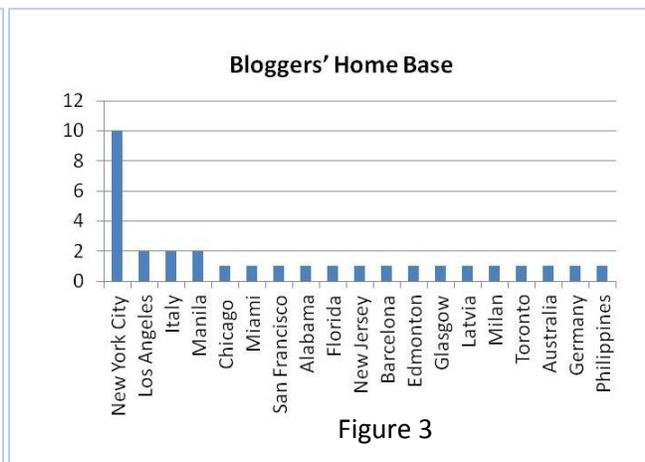
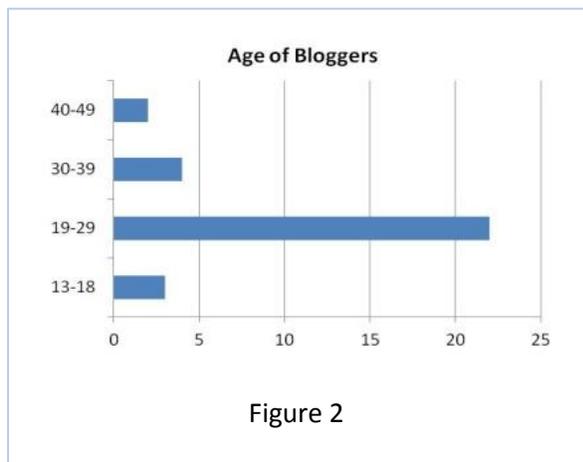
Qualitative data is an important part of this study; therefore the majority of the survey questions were in-depth, open-ended questions about process and methods. The entire text of the survey can be found in Appendix I. Given the small sample size – only 31 fashion bloggers took our survey within a two month period – we understand that the conclusions drawn may not be representative of all fashion bloggers. As explained in the Methodology section, we attribute the low response rate to difficulties connecting with fashion bloggers amid the sea of correspondence they receive.

Demographics of the Bloggers and their Blogs

The fashion bloggers who responded to our survey represent a variety of ages and geographies. The vast majority (70.9%) fall within the 19–29 age group. 9.6% of respondents are 13–19 years of age, 12.9% are 30–39, and 6.4% are 40–49.

Our survey received responses from around the world. The largest percentage of bloggers said they are based in New York City (32.2%) with Los Angeles, Italy and Manila, Philippines (6.4%) tied for second place. Others locations represented are Alabama, Toronto, Miami, New Jersey, Australia, Florida, Edmonton, Scotland, Latvia, Milan, Glasgow, Barcelona, San Francisco, Chicago, and Germany. The 31 bloggers who participated in our survey represent 10 different countries; the fashion industry is no longer exclusively tied to major cosmopolitan cities like New York, Paris, and Milan.

In terms of gender, our survey participants are reflective of fashion bloggers as a whole. The majority (87%) of our respondents identify as female. According to Alice Marwick (2011), fashion bloggers are overwhelmingly female, especially high-profile bloggers who have received the attention of the fashion industry (p. 1). We did have a few male bloggers (9.6%) and one respondent did not answer.



Inspiration and Information Needed to Create Individual Blog Posts

Inspiration for the surveyed bloggers varied. The most common sources of inspiration come from fashion news and trends (18) and bloggers' personal experiences (12). Other sources of inspiration include:

- personal style (5),
- street style (4),
- entertainment and pop culture (4),

- budget and finance (3),
- websites and blogs (3),
- magazines, nature, music (2),
- content post to social networking sites such as Pinterest and Polyvore (1),
- travel (1),
- dreams (1)

In terms of information needs, almost half of all respondents (14) agreed that high-resolution images are key component to their fashion blogs. Other sources of information are press releases (2), historical trend data (4), statistics (1), prices and other cost considerations (2) and brand information (2). Some respondents said that magazines (3) and newspapers (2), model/styling information (1) were helpful elements in creating their own blog posts. Other needs included access to the Internet (4), laws regarding transgendered people (1), other blogs (2), background information on trends (1), personal accounts (4), and interviews with industry professionals (1).

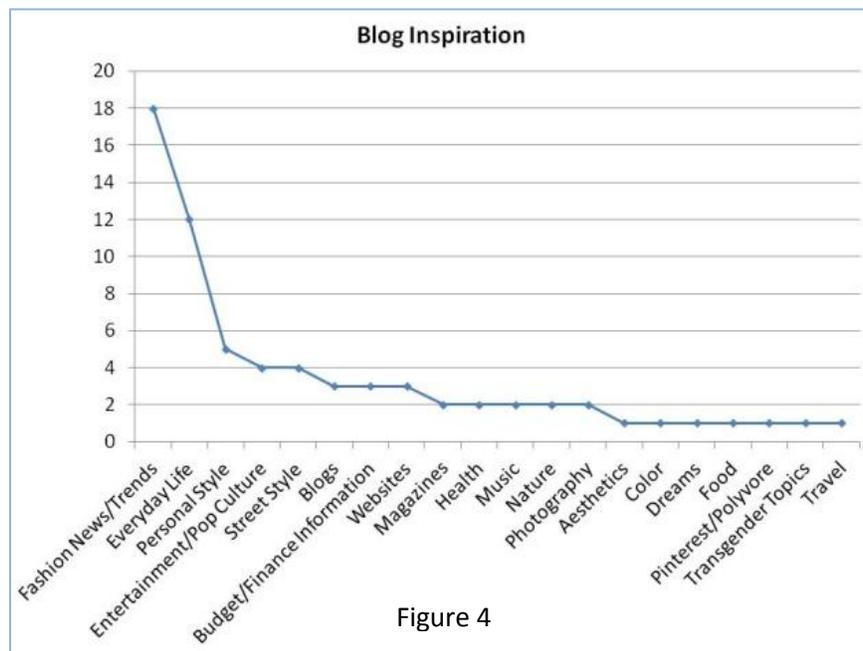


Figure 4

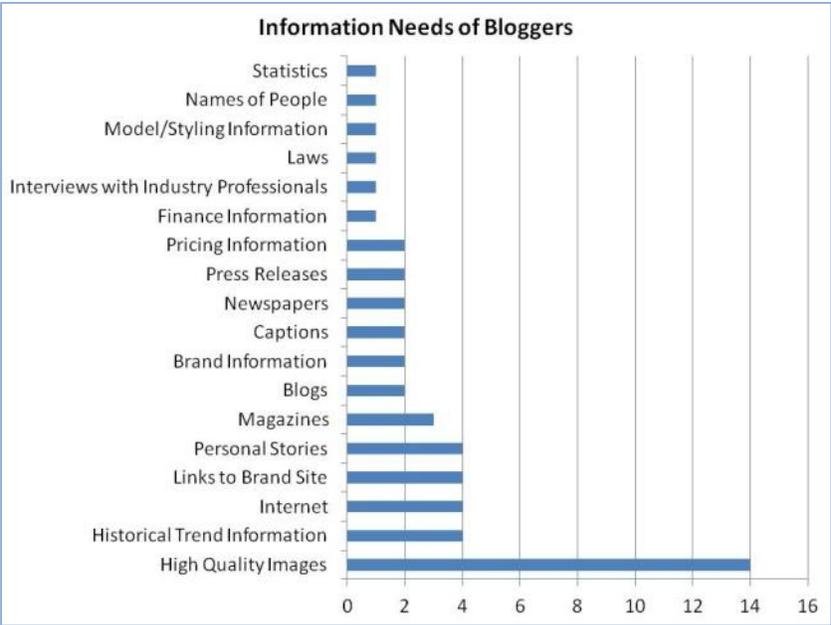


Figure 5

Conducting Research and Gathering Resources for Individual Blog Posts

The survey revealed that most bloggers conduct their research using the Internet (90.3%). Other research methods include photographing street style (48.3%) and interviews with industry professionals (25.8%). Others said they use personal experience, magazines, and/or books to conduct their research (6.4%). Some use Fashion Weeks to help them conduct their research (9.6%). Other places included libraries, stores, conferences/expos, movies, and nature (3.2%). Most of the bloggers tend to use magazines and journals (26). Some respondents chose to use other blogs (24) and websites (23) to gather information regarding individual blog posts. Newspapers were also a big resource for our bloggers to use for their posts (12). One blogger each responded saying that they used events that they attended, books, and original interviews.

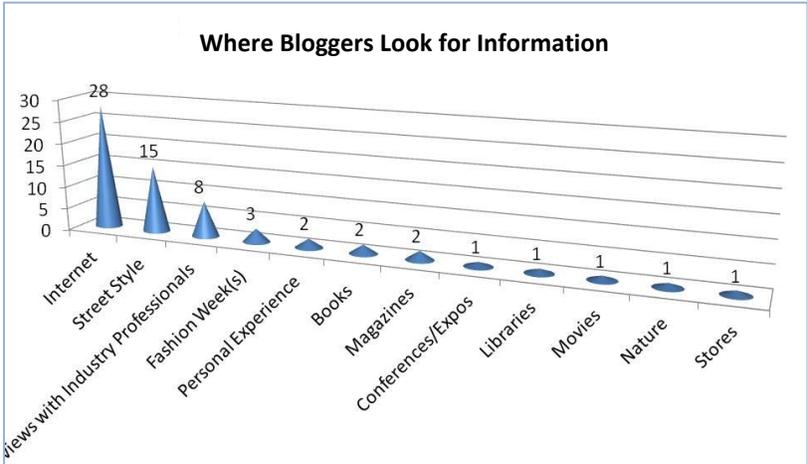


Figure 6

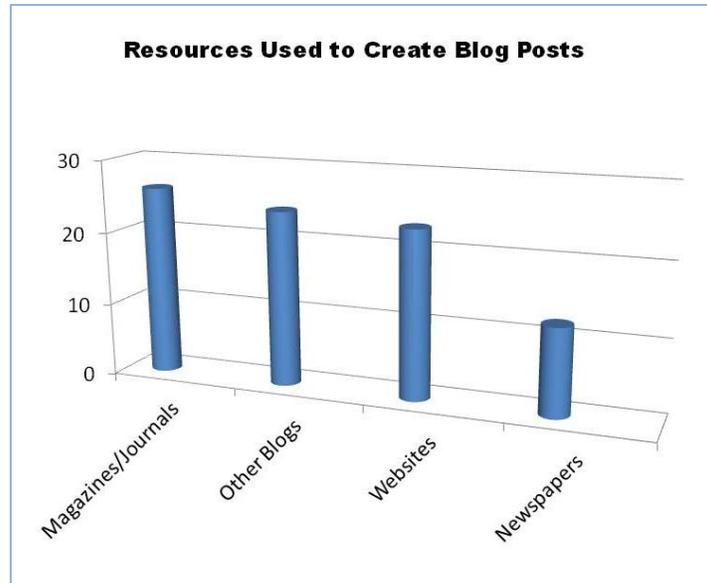


Figure 7

Collaborating with Others

All respondents reported that they do not collaborate with other bloggers to produce posts. However, three respondents (9.6%) indicated that they *would* collaborate with other fashion bloggers given the opportunity.

When asked which circumstances would inspire collaboration, the most common response emphasized the idea of a mutual partnership; whomever they work with would need to have the same aesthetic and/or beliefs as they do. Others were interested in cross-promotion for both their own blogs and the blog of the person with whom they collaborated (2). One person said that if they couldn't attend an event they would ask another blogger or a friend who was a good writer to attend and post on their blog on their behalf. One respondent said they were interested in sponsorship (partnering with a brand). Others said travel inspires collaboration as well as the idea of working with someone who is expressive and inspiring (2).

Consistent Difficulty Finding Information Needed for Fashion Blogging

When we asked the surveyed fashion bloggers about what information is consistently difficult to obtain but is required to create their posts, most survey respondents left the question blank. One blogger stated that "nothing" is difficult to find when it comes to locating and obtaining information for their posts. Three other respondents stated that they know where to find the information they need. Among the challenges indicated were finding high-resolution images (3), and photographers (2). Unique and original content was also mentioned as a challenge. One blogger noted that they had trouble finding information about Search Engine Optimization (SEO), in that they wanted to know more about what it is and how it can benefit their blog. Two respondents noted that they had trouble obtaining media passes required to gain entry into events and fashion shows. Other respondents indicated that they needed help finding unbiased information and information on products and advice for transgendered people.

The Role of Image Searching and Acquisition

We asked respondents to describe the role that searching for and acquiring images plays in the creation of their blogs posts. Sixteen commented that that they utilize their personal images and therefore do not have to worry about copyright issues. Others noted that they use other websites (13) and blogs (5) as a major source for images used on their own blog. Some respondents said that they credit the sites from which they take these images and photos and use hyperlinks to link back to the original image. Several respondents noted that other image resources that they consult are websites like Tumblr, Polyvore, and Stock Photos. One respondent said that the companies would send products to photograph.

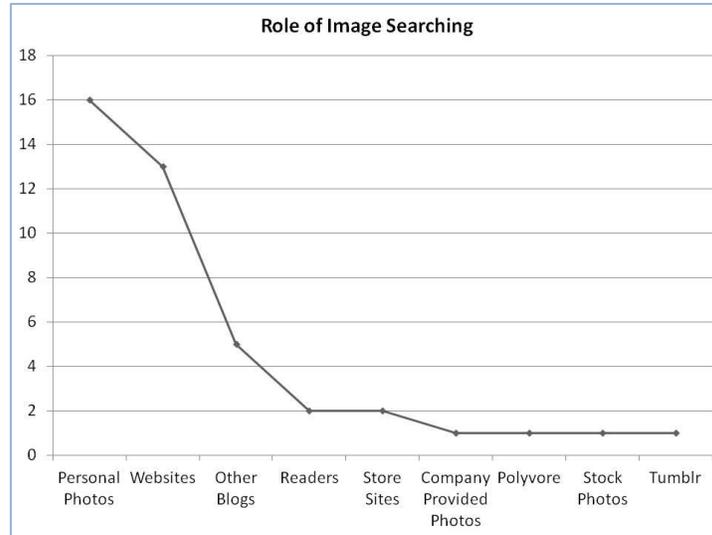


Figure 8

Image Subscription Services

Given the importance of images to fashion blogs, we were interested in whether or not bloggers use images services such as Getty Images, iStock Photo, or stock.xchng. Only two (6.4%) out of a total of 31 respondents subscribe to an image service, which often has copyright clearance included in the cost of the photo. Services specifically mentioned include Fashion Gone Rogue, Weheartit, and stock.xchng.

Information Subscription Services

Beyond images, we asked the fashion bloggers which information subscription services they use. Most bloggers reported that they use magazines to assist them with their blog posts such as Vogue, GQ, V Magazine, Glamour, Elle, InStyle, and Details (9). Others use various websites such as Refinery 29, Chictopia, and Style.com to assist them with the composition of their blog posts (7). The New York Times (NYT) and Women’s Wear Daily (WWD) were popular answers as well (5). Two responded that they consult other bloggers for information. One respondent mentioned Flipboard (a social reader application) and another said when they have time they go to press sites to locate information for their posts.

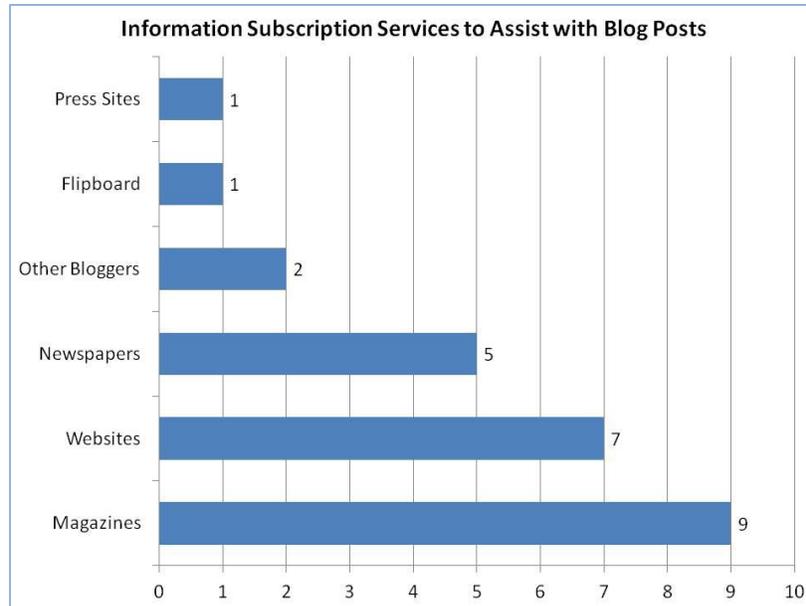


Figure 9

Employing the Services of Professional Researchers

We were interested in surveying fashion bloggers to find out what kinds of tasks they would want a professional researcher (librarian or other information professional) to perform or assist them with if they were able to employ such services. Most bloggers (10) responded that they either would not use a professional researcher or gave no answer to this question. If they were to utilize the skills of a professional researcher, they would have the researcher investigate:

- fashion forecasting (5),
- blog optimization (3),
- employing photographers,
- proper photo editing and acquisition,
- avenues for inspiration,
- celebrity culture and images (2)

Others would like help with pricing, reader needs, photo organization, unique content creation, Fashion Week scheduling, fit for various body styles and gender identities, effective social networking, and interview question construction.

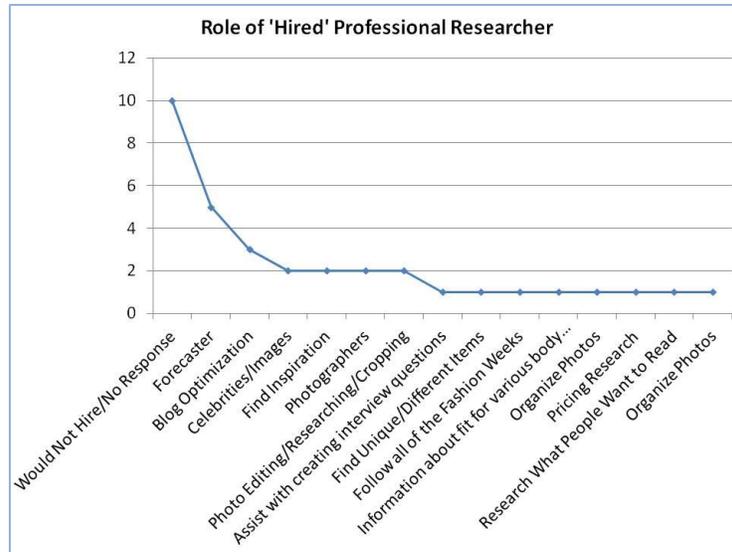


Figure 10

Follow-up Questions and Visibility of the Survey

The majority of bloggers indicated that they would be willing to be contacted for a follow-up interview about their blogging process (61.2%). Only one respondent stated that they would not be willing to be contacted for follow-up. However, after repeatedly reaching out to these bloggers, only one submitted responses to our follow-up questions. Many respondents discovered the survey via a direct email from the Researchers (35.4%). The second largest respondent group found out about the survey through a friend (12.9%). However, we did not ask this question on the original survey and therefore unintentionally missed 12.9% of our respondents. 9.6% of respondents did not answer the question.

ANALYSIS & CONCLUSION

Although our sample size is small compared to the ever-growing number of fashion bloggers, there are general conclusions we can make about how this user group approaches research and information-seeking. Based on our research, we posit three observations about the information seeking behavior of fashion bloggers:

1. the importance of appearing authentic and knowledgeable discourages bloggers from consulting information professionals for research assistance;
2. the majority of fashion bloggers tend to access and use information in a manner characteristic of millennials. This along with blogging's inherently fast-paced nature stymies in-depth research;
3. fashion blogging hinges on information sharing among bloggers and other online sources but a fair and consistent standard of citation has not been established.

Authenticity

As evidenced by the literature on fashion bloggers and their qualitative comments, a bloggers' success is most often evaluated on the notion of authenticity or having a unique voice. Bloggers must demonstrate that their opinions have value and credibility; otherwise they will not obtain and retain readership and advertisers. "The indication of individual identity through the curation and display of clothing and

accessories is in keeping with the ethos of social media, which emphasizes authenticity above all” (Marwick 2010). To achieve this legitimacy, a blogger’s opinions have to be rooted in a vast knowledge of fashion and style. Doing outside research and consulting an information professional for help would give the appearance that the blogger didn’t have the sufficient knowledge base to run an impactful blog. When asked “If you could employ the services of a professional researcher, what would you have them do?” one respondent stated, “I wouldn't. That would take a large part of my work away that I truly enjoy doing.” Another responder from Spain stated, “I prefer to be my own researcher.” It is clear that the surveyed fashion bloggers hold authenticity in high regards and are reluctant to transfer responsibility of knowledge curation and acquisition to a professional (read: non-fashion blogger) researcher.

Most bloggers who responded to our survey did not answer our query about employing the services of a professional or stated that they do not need the help of the researcher. Those who did provide an answer to this question described tasks normally associated with the work of a personal assistant-- keeping track of fashion industry events, taking photographs, and staying informed on fashion trends. In response to “What information do you need for fashion blogging that is consistently difficult to find or obtain?” a blogger stated “I have the opposite problem; I have too much content, too many products to review (to the point that I now very rarely accept a product by mail), and an average of 8+ events/week to attend with generally very generous gift bags of products to try. Staying organized and on top of my calendar is the difficult part.” Another blogger responded that they need help “organizing ... my own images.” A third stated, “I’d love my personal photographer for taking pictures when at fashion weeks and other go outs. But otherwise I like to do everything myself. I’m not very trustful when it comes to these kinds of things.” These quotes indicate that fashion bloggers’ immediate needs are not research assistance but instead personal and organizational assistance.

As reported in the literature and as demonstrated by our respondents, personal fashion blogs are primarily based on personal experiences and style and made up of self-generated content. Often the information needed for a new post literally resides in the fashion bloggers’ closet and thus few secondary sources are needed to create a personal fashion blog post. As one blogger stated, “for me it's not difficult to find the information for my fashion blog because all the texts are made by me.” Since much of fashion blog content is opinion based, it is not obvious or appropriate to conduct research in the traditional sense. A blogger from Alabama stated, “I am not sure that [hiring an information professional] would be useful for my blog, since I use mine mostly ... [to] express personal opinions.” These bloggers view themselves as individualists in both their style and opinions and therefore are hesitant to consult sources outside of themselves and their experiences.

Since fashion bloggers operate in an environment where authenticity (or perceived authenticity) is the defining factor of success, librarians need to present themselves not as information providers but as a “toolkit” for better information acquisition. Information professionals seeking to serve fashion bloggers would be advised to focus on marketing access to diverse and rich fashion-related materials, especially periodicals like Women’s Wear Daily, Vogue, Harper’s Bazaar and trend forecasting periodicals such as CAUSEffect, Close-Up, and Collezioni. Most bloggers are independent and not in the financial position to subscribe to these often costly resources. Although bloggers may not have institutional affiliations, most librarians, are willing and delighted to answer questions from the public.

Survey results also indicated that fashion bloggers tend to be confident searchers. In step with most millennials (and it should be noted that most, 70.9%, of our respondents are in the 19-29 age group) fashion bloggers believe that they already know how to find all the information they need. As one blogger stated, “It’s not difficult to find if you know where to look. For me it’s been this way.” Another

indicated, “Nothing is hard to obtain in this day and age if you know where to look” and a third stated, “I tend to find all that I need.” While the millennial bloggers tend to believe that they know how and where to look for everything that they would need, we are sure that librarians would be able to assist in their search by offering their skills and knowledge of subject keywords and the workings of individual databases.

Prêt-à-porter le Blog

Blogging, fashion and otherwise, is a fast-paced endeavor. In order to attract and maintain readership and attention in the internet’s crowded information sphere, a blog must provide frequent and timely updates. As Lovink (2008) puts it, “Technology such as the Internet lives on the principle of permanent change . . . The ‘tyranny of the new’ rule” (p. xi). “Witness the live streaming of fashion shows, events once the preserve of an elite given the privilege to see the collections months ahead of their appearance in print media and in shops” (Rocamora, 2012, p. 97). This need and want for instant gratification is demonstrated below.

Rocamora continues, “in their constant, often daily, updating of sites with new posts, fashion blogs feed into this tyranny of the new, constructing, more than any other media, fashion as transient, passing, already gone (p. 97). Not only must bloggers create content at a rate that keeps up with the industry and the expectations of its readers but also to remain competitive with other blogs. As one blogger stated, “It’s very difficult to not write about the same news and write fashion news before other bloggers!” The pressure fashion bloggers experience to constantly update their blogs with new and unique postings causes them to prioritize quantity over well-researched, quality posts.

Fashion blogging’s rapid pace does not lend itself to in-depth and complex research that is often the purview of librarians and libraries. The over 90% of fashion bloggers that reported they find the majority of their information on the Internet supports this information seeking practice; for information to be useful to a fashion blogger it must be easily and quickly accessible, without the need for complex searches or time-consuming investigations.

Fast-paced, easily accessible information seeking is also in line with that of millennials. As supported by the 2011 report “‘If It Is Too Inconvenient, I’m Not Going After It:’ Convenience as a Critical Factor in Information-seeking Behaviors,” the “centrality of convenience is especially prevalent among ...millennial[s] (Connaway, Dickey, & Radford, p. 22), citing the importance of complete and easy access to resources when appealing to this age group. As stated above, most bloggers who responded to our survey fall within this demographic. An excellent summary of the characteristics of the millennial generation is provided by Mark McMahon and Romana Pospisil (2005) in their article “Laptops for a Digital Lifestyle: Millennial Students and Wireless Mobile Technologies.” They state:

The world in which millennial students have grown up is typically rich with technology, information and digital media and they have been exposed to IT from a very young age. The millennial generation stay connected by using SMS, mobile phones, chatrooms and email while they simultaneously play computer games, listen to music and watch TV (Frاند, 2000, p. 18; Oblinger, 2003; Rickard & Oblinger, 2003). They have adapted to continuous multitasking and switch from one activity to another quickly and with minimal readjustment time (Brown, 2000, p. 13). These students are accustomed to fast food, fast everything and have zero tolerance for delays (Frاند, 2000).

Librarians catering to fashion bloggers could consider the advice of Connaway, Dickey, and Radford:

In the current environment, most people do not have time to spend searching for information or learning how to use a new information source or access method. In order to be one of the first choices for information, library systems and interfaces need to look familiar to people by resembling popular Web interfaces, and library services need to be easily accessible and require little or no training to use (p. 28).

Librarians might not be able to assist with the immediacy of individual posts. However, we could aid fashion bloggers by providing access to information that would allow their posts to have original content as well as help to better equip bloggers with the skills and strategies necessary to quickly find quality information. As we stated above, if we present ourselves as 'toolkits' that provide access to information, we could potentially assist them in making their immediate postings unique. While there might be more than one blogger attending an event and uploading posts on the spot, with unique knowledge of said event or designer, the blogger who employs an information specialist or librarian could provide a unique spin on the posts.

Linking = Citing?

In both the survey and the personalized follow-up interview, bloggers stated that most of their images and blog posts come from personal photography and experiences. However, blogging also depends heavily upon borrowed text and images from other online sources. Rocamora (2012) refers to this concept as hypertextuality. "With the World Wide Web, however, and the blogosphere in particular, hypertextuality has proliferated. It is the very structure blogs rest on. When the reader clicks on a link, images (both still and moving), words and sounds can come at once on the screen, quickly succeeding and completing each other" (p. 95). She continues, "fashion blogs constantly relate to other blogs, be it through directly linking to them in a post or by including them in their blogroll, the list of blogs and the related links bloggers favour" (p. 96). As is clear, blogs refer to each other or "cite" not using an official citation standard like Chicago or MLA, like what is customary in traditional scholarship, but simply via the practice of "linking" or creating a hyperlink that refers back to the original source.

Since there are no clearly defined standards, the question then becomes one concerned with best practices for citing information sources. When asked during the follow-up interview, one blogger said "If there are any phrases or images I would like to borrow, I always make sure to cite all my sources by posting the links on where the reader may find them." When asked to describe the role of image searching and acquisition, many respondents said that they freely use images from other sites and expressed that they did not worry too much with regards to copyright. In order to feel as though they were citing the website or blogger of the photo(s) that they had used they either listed the site/blogger's name or linked back to their site. One stated, "In my full knowledge and opinion, it is very much acceptable for anyone and everyone to reuse all images off the World Wide Web PROVIDED they clearly and VISIBLY cite their references and all links to where they originally "borrowed" the images from." So much of fashion blogging is linking to other posts. It was a general consensus among the respondents that this is considered the accepted citation style of the fashion world.

The flipside of linking to a website or blog with regard to copyright and citation is whether or not bloggers are concerned with others linking to their own blogs, which can sometimes include their own original content. Do they use Creative Commons to protect their posts or do they use watermarks on their images? We had one respondent answer our individualized follow-up interview and stated that they did not believe that they were a well-known blogger so that this was not a current issue. She was:

genuinely concerned about other bloggers or anybody who do not ask permission to use my original images. There is no current policy that protects all users on the internet for the images that they upload to be used without their consent. Right now, the internet can access anybody's images and anybody really

can own any image found on the internet unless specified. Sad to say that not even watermarks on the images can deter people from editing them to claim it as their own.

What is most interesting about this sentiment is bloggers' desire for protection over their own images and texts while simultaneously assuming the right, entitlement, and flexibility to freely use third-party content without going through official clearance channels. This behavior is symptomatic of information sharing and exchange on the Internet, especially in the blogosphere which encourages and is built upon easy and seamless knowledge exchange.

IFB does offer some guidance for its bloggers. Taylor Davies, author of the post "Legally Blog: Know Your Rights," provides basic explanations of key copyright concepts such as fair use, plagiarism, and the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA). While this document is certainly a step in the right direction in standardizing sharing among blogs, the counsel offered is often vague and cursory. For example, Creative Commons Licenses, which in many respects are tailor-made for blog content, are not mentioned at all. Additionally when discussing fair use, the document states "Generally, say you republish a photo from another source to comment on it, or someone takes a paragraph from and then comments on it, that's okay. If you're not adding anything, – taking a photo from somewhere else and commenting on it it's usually okay." Unfortunately, the oversimplified language of this seemingly authoritative document does not arm bloggers with the tools needed to navigate complex and serious copyright concerns.

In another post, "Should Start-ups Get Permission to Use Blogger Images?", Davies (2012) questions the practice of aggregator sites drawing content from fashion and style blogs and instructs bloggers on how to protect themselves from sites borrowing their content. While the intended audience of this post is probably style bloggers (those bloggers who post images of themselves and do not rely on images from the open web or image services), the focus of IFB's input on copyright (and judging by the comments left by our respondents, bloggers themselves) concerns the protection of content creators, not proper and ethical information use.

If our respondents' comments and documents such as those produced by IFB are any indication, fashion bloggers are certainly in need of guidance and instruction on intellectual property and copyright. Librarians and information professionals trained in these areas are the ideal partners in this endeavor and opens up the possibility for enhanced collaboration between fashion blogosphere and the library world.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

As this project came to a close, we realized that there were several unanticipated avenues for further research. In the literature, especially trade periodicals and newspapers, fashion bloggers are often contrasted with traditional journalists. The next step in examining how fashion bloggers use and find information would likely be to find comparable studies of journalists within librarianship's literature and examine any parallels and/or deviations between the two populations.

Additionally, when constructing the literature review for this report, we came across several books authored by more prominent fashion bloggers. While many bloggers said that they felt like they did not need professional assistance in regards to daily posts, we had to wonder, would they need research assistance with a more substantial publication such as a book? More research could be conducted with regards to the publication process of putting together a book versus a fashion blog.

Finally, as fashion bloggers appear to share many of the habits of millennials, a more comprehensive examination of fashion bloggers as millennial information users is warranted. Are fashion bloggers truly unique in their information seeking methods or do they simply behave like millennials operating within a niche context? The more we analyzed the survey results and delved into the literature on millennials, the more this parallel resonated with us. Given the scope of this report, we were only able to touch upon this intriguing dynamic, but there is certainly much more to be explored and examined. It is also pertinent to examine the methods and behaviors of fashion bloggers not within the millennial age group. For example, our survey respondents included bloggers aged 30-39 (12.9%) and 40-49 (6.4%). We felt that it would be interesting to see how those populations seek for, interact with, and utilize information within the context of fashion blogging.

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APPENDIX I: SURVEY

Fashion Bloggers: Research Behavior & Methods

This survey was developed and will only be used by a team of three librarians, Kim Detterbeck (SUNY-Purchase College), Nicole LaMoreaux (Fashion Institute of Technology & LIM College), and Marie Sciangula (SUNY-Purchase College). We are part of a project called myMETRO Researchers which is sponsored by the Metropolitan New York Library Council (METRO). Each team consists of degreed librarians who are highly qualified researchers interested in knowing more about trends and trendsetters in New York City. Our team is focused on the research and information needs and methods of fashion bloggers (New York-based and otherwise). This survey is totally anonymous (unless you choose otherwise) and will only be used by our research team for information purposes only. Thank you for taking the time to complete our survey, and please share this link with any other fashion bloggers you know! Visit our project website at <http://goo.gl/qHZsa>.

Describe what inspires your blog posts.

What kinds of information do you need for a blog post? For example: sales data, historical trend data, image caption information, etc

Where do you conduct your research? Check all that apply.

- Libraries
- Internet
- Interviews with industry professionals
- On the street
- Other:

What resources do you use to research blog posts? Check all that apply.

- Other blogs
- Newspapers
- Magazines and journals
- Websites (besides blogs)
- Other:

With whom do you collaborate to write your blog posts? Check all that apply.

- No one. I tend to write my blog post independently.
- Other fashion bloggers
- Other bloggers (outside the fashion industry)
- Writers and journalists from fashion magazine and trade journals
- Other:

If/when you do collaborate, what inspires you to do so?

What information do you need for fashion blogging that is consistently difficult to find or obtain?

Describe the role image searching and acquisition has for your blog? For example: where and how do you find images? What role does copyright play?, etc

Do you subscribe to a stock image service (like Getty Images)?

- Yes
- No

If yes, what image service(s) do you subscribe to? If no, please skip.

Do you subscribe to any other services that provide information for your blog posts? If so, please describe. For example: Vogue Magazine archive database, the New York Times, WWD.com, etc.

If you could employ the services of a professional researcher, what would you have them do?

Basic information about you and your blog

Age

- 13-18
- 19-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70-79
- 80-89
- 90-99
- Prefer not to answer

Gender

- Female
- FtM
- genderqueer
- Male
- MtF
- Prefer not to answer

Where are you based? For example: New York, Brazil, Toronto.

What is the title and URL of your blog?

Please provide a short description of your blog.

How long have you been blogging about fashion?

- Less than a year
- 1-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- Over 10 years

Are you willing to be contacted by the research team for more information about your research and information needs? If so, please provide a name and contact information.

How did you hear about this survey?

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Pinterest
- From another blogger
- From The Independent Fashion Bloggers site
- Other:

Appendix II: Process Report

From the outset, our group knew we wanted to focus on fashion bloggers but what about them? After an initial brainstorming session, we decided to focus on the information-seeking/research behaviors and methods of fashion bloggers; how do they conduct their research and gather information to create blog posts? How do fashion bloggers create and use information?

Throughout the six months that we have worked on this project, our team met weekly via Google chat, usually lasting for an hour. Establishing a weekly standing meeting worked well for us, as it kept us on-task and allowed us to regularly organize and strategize our next steps.

Most of our meetings were used to discuss how to proceed with the project. Project deliverables - the survey, the follow-up questions, email content, scholarship, research, etc. - were completed by each member of the group, outside of the weekly meeting time. We composed all of our documentation in Google Docs, which allowed us to collaborate asynchronously and remotely.

One of the most important documents we maintained was our "Process" Google Doc, where we recorded all correspondence relating to this project, possible avenues for help, all of our to-do lists, and other brainstorming ideas. The process document allowed each member of the group to stay abreast of what needed to be done and where we were within the timeline of the project.

We also used Google products for external communication. A 20 question Google Form survey was the main information gathering mechanism for the project. Google Form allowed us to collect and track responses in a Google Spreadsheet. Development of survey questions took place collaboratively within Google Docs.

In order to streamline and better facilitate communication with respondents, we created a dedicated Gmail account to which each group member has access. This dedicated email functioned as our primary address when communicating via email with fashion bloggers and was useful when it came time to follow-up with respondents who wished to be contacted further.

Because our chosen population is so broad, we could not find a meeting or gathering to attend during which we could interview a group of fashion bloggers. Unfortunately, we missed the Independent Fashion Bloggers (IFB) 2012 conference but we still decided to focus on the IFB community as our main research population. We reached out to the founder of the IFB community, explaining the crux of our research, in hopes of having a link placed on the IFB main page. Our initial contact with IFB was via myMETRO; we asked Tom Nielsen to send an email on our behalf, introducing us and the project, in order to appear professional and legitimate. Realizing that high-profile bloggers receive a lot of unsolicited emails and "spam" we looked for ways to stand out and draw attention to our project. In spite of this, we did not receive a response, which was a rather anticipated result, and a link to the survey did not appear on IFB's homepage. Instead, we explored other means of distributing the survey.

A large channel of distribution was through social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Tumblr, LinkedIn, and the IFB discussion board. We also used direct marketing techniques by emailing fashion bloggers individually and putting up signs with QR codes that linked directly to the survey in our individual workplaces. Over the course of two months, we received a total of 31 survey responses from fashion bloggers located all over the world.

In order to place the findings of our survey in a context, we felt conducted a review of the literature on fashion bloggers as information seekers and users. We gathered background information from journal articles, interviews, conference keynote speakers, and books published by some of the more prominent fashion bloggers to develop our literature review. We compiled our resources using the open source citation manager Zotero. We created a group library, which we were able to update in real-time, syncing resources automatically each time a group member made an addition or update.

We created a Google Sites web presence for the project, which allowed us to communicate the details of our project with those we were targeting to take the survey. Ultimately, we plan to make our final report available on the project website along with the names and URLs of all the bloggers who participated in the survey.

As we reached the end of the project, we began to have weekly in-person meetings in order to construct the final report and prepare for the presentation event. As much as we benefited from Google Docs allowing us to work together but in different locations, our collaborations thrived in person. At this point of the project we encountered one of our biggest challenges--finding a place to work in the summer in New York City! Finding a centrally-located working place with Wi-Fi and outlets was by far this project's largest obstacle. In compiling the final report, we did not declare an official "team editor," as specified in the myMETRO Researchers guidelines.

Overall, our group found this project tremendously rewarding, both professionally and personally, and delightfully challenging. Focusing on fashion bloggers allowed us to expand our professional scope to a topic and a user group not immediately associated with libraries and one not deeply explored in the profession's literature. On a more personal level, fashion is not a topic two of us directly deal with in our day-to-day jobs (Marie is an educational technologist and Kim is an art librarian at an institution without a fashion or textile program). Not only do we perform very different job functions, we also come from diverse academic backgrounds; Marie has a degree in women's studies, Kim's degrees are in art history and Nicole studied fashion merchandising, advertising marketing and communications.

Our research and project has also attracted the attention of our colleagues. We have been asked to participate in LIM's Fashion: Now & Then symposium which focuses on past, present, and future uses of fashion information. We have also been approached to be part of a panel at ARLIS 2013 in Pasadena (Art Libraries Society of North America) on fashion resources in art libraries. We are excited that this project has future implications for our professional development and for fashion blogging research.