

# The programmable blog

Martin Fenner 

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## Front Matter

Today I am relaunching the [Syldavia Gazette](#) blog on a new blogging platform, switching from [Ghost](#) to [Quarto](#). This allows me to use [Jupyter notebooks](#) in the blog to help generate blog posts. The Syldavia Gazette (the other blog I manage besides the Front Matter blog) description says

*The Syldavia Gazette is a newsletter highlighting interesting science stories from around the web.*

With the launch of the [Rogue Scholar](#) science blog archive and the growth of content ([10,858 posts](#) as of today) the Syldavia Gazette in August [switched focus to highlight Rogue Scholar blog posts](#). This not only makes it much easier for me to find interesting science stories using the Rogue Scholar [full-text search](#), but also facilitates reuse by readers, as all Rogue Scholar posts come with a DOI with rich metadata, are freely available with an open license ([CC-BY](#)) as full-text, and are [archived with the Internet Archive](#). With the [release of a dedicated API](#) last month, programmatic access to Rogue Scholar content has become much easier, and the relaunched Syldavia Gazette takes advantage of that.

The Syldavia Gazette currently publishes two kinds of blog posts:

- [A weekly digest](#) of all Rogue Scholar posts published in the past week is published every Wednesday afternoon.
- [Overlay blog posts](#) about a particular topic, taking content from the Rogue Scholar archive and adding an editorial, are published every few weeks. The first overlay blog post – edited by [Heinz Pampel](#) and celebrating [Open Access Week](#)– was [published three weeks ago](#).

Both formats benefit from automation, using [Jupyter notebooks](#) and the Rogue Scholar API to either automatically generate a [weekly digest](#), or to generate a draft blog post around a [specific topic](#) that can then be finalized manually. The two notebooks not only automatically generate a summary (in a format similar to the [listing of posts](#) on the Rogue Scholar website), but also automatically generate a list of references based on the Rogue Scholar metadata. With the switch to Quarto, the notebooks can now be run directly in the blog, simplifying the process – the notebook *is* the blog post.

Depending on your preferred editor, you can write and run the notebooks in a [text editor](#), [in the RStudio IDE](#), or in [Jupyterlab](#). Notebooks can be written in the Quarto `.qmd` format or as `.ipynb` files. Besides the execution of notebooks, Quarto has other convenient features for scholarly documents, including support for [references](#) ([working with the Zotero](#) Reference Manager), built-in support for DOIs and ORCID IDs, and support for a variety of output formats (including, PDF, ePub, and JATS) via [Pandoc](#). If you want to use a [static site generator](#) for your scholarly blog (as about [25% of Rogue Scholar](#) blogs do), take a close look at Quarto.

Static site generators such as Quarto are not the best fit for everyone. For other blogs, a traditional blogging platform backed by a database and with a user-friendly web frontend might be the better option, and Wordpress is the [most popular platform](#) amongst Rogue Scholar

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blogs, used by 38% of all blogs. Rogue Scholar supports all blogging platforms and currently is used by about 10 different platforms.

In the coming weeks and months, I will work on improving the Syldavia Gazette blog. Quarto for example currently only supports RSS feeds and not Atom or JSON feeds, which work better with additional author metadata such as the ORCID ID and/or multiple authors. And [just yesterday](#) Chris von Csefalvay published a blog post on how to automate the integration of Rogue Scholar DOIs into a Quarto blog.

This change of the blogging platform from Ghost to Quarto involved a lot of copy-pasting, which was okay as the Syldavia Gazette currently has fewer than 20 posts. But for bigger migrations, it would be great to have a canonical data exchange format to make the process easier, a goal for the Rogue Scholar platform for 2024.

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