

THE SECRET LIFE OF A BLOG POST

Mapping the journey from servers to scrapers to suits—to the world.

You have a blog. You compose a new post. You click Publish and lean back to admire your work. Imperceptibly and all but instantaneously, your post slips into a vast and recursive network of software agents, where it is crawled, indexed, mined, scraped, republished, and propagated throughout the Web. Within minutes, if you've written about a timely and noteworthy topic, a small army of bots will get the word out to anyone remotely interested, from fellow bloggers to corporate marketers. Let's say it's Super Bowl Sunday and you're blogging about beer. You see Budweiser's blockbuster commercial and have a reaction you'd like to share. Thanks to search engines and aggregators that compile lists of interesting posts, you can reach a lot of people—and Budweiser, its competitors, beer lovers, ad critics, and your ex-boyfriend can listen in. "You just need to know how to type," says Matthew Hurst, an artificial intelligence researcher who studies this ecosystem at Microsoft Live Labs. Here's how the whole process goes down during the big game.

by FRANK ROSE
infographic by BUILD

