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'Blogsboro' convenes a cyberspace party

If you've ever posted on, responded to, or just happened upon a blog in your travels through cyberspace, this weekend's ConvergeSouth conference is your kind of party -- the next step in Greensboro's evolution to Blogsboro.

On the other hand, if blogs (aka Web logs, aka online journals) and podcasts sound as alien to you as beings from other planets, you could be just the kind of person ConvergeSouth, at N.C. A&T Friday and Saturday, hopes to draw.

With more than 450 already signed up to attend, registration for the free conference is full for Friday and nearing capacity for Saturday. But organizers encourage those interested in attending to get on the waiting list online: convergesouth.com/register.asp.

"Creativity on the Web for all people" is the conference theme or, better yet, rallying cry -- sounded by local blogger, journalist and News & Record columnist Edward Cone in a podcast (aka online radio show) this week. One key to bridging the digital divide, he said, is breaking down walls that the jargon tossed around by Internet insiders can create.

"So, if we talk about podcasting among ourselves, that's great. But when we talk to other people, we have to be careful to say, oh yeah, this conference is going to talk about ways you can put sound on the Web, you can put video on the Web," Cone said.

Fostering that kind of creative energy and ownership on the Internet, across racial and socioeconomic lines, can only be a boon for Greensboro, the Triad and beyond, as technology's role in commerce and culture continues to grow. As Cone notes, ConvergeSouth could be a long-term development opportunity for Greensboro. And of course, there's the more immediate economic impact of hundreds of attendees converging in town.

On Friday night, conference sessions will be followed by musical entertainment at several downtown venues. On Saturday, session leaders are hosting dinners at downtown restaurants, followed by a 9 p.m. concert by singer/songwriter Alana Davis at Solaris.

Sue Polinsky, a blogger and one of several conference organizers, is among many who initially saw Greensboro, with its thriving and increasingly varied blogging culture, as a natural fit for a conference that seeks to broaden the online community and its conversations. The choice of A&T as the conference's main venue is equally significant -- reflecting the spirit the event hopes to promote online, along with its wide-ranging sessions on topics including outsider blogging, faith blogging, and blogging in elected office.

Yes, some big names in blogging and journalism will be in on those sessions. But so will folks who aren't so familiar, who'll bring new dimensions to the dialogue. A convergence of forces with every chance of creating intriguing possibilities for Blogsboro's (aka Greensboro's) future.