

Web 2.0 and You

Which trends and technologies are for your library?

by Michael Stephens

Since last year's publication of my article "The Promise of Web 2.0" (*AL*, Oct. 2006, p. 32), we've seen more 2.0-type tools, more books and articles about those tools, and more conference presentations than one could count. For my report this year, I focused one section on the bigger picture instead of a list of best practices for each specific tool. Use these as a guide to move forward with a library blog, IM reference, a wiki, or any of the other tools you've encountered—or those we haven't even heard of yet. Remember, Web 2.0 tools won't solve all of your problems, but you may find some solutions that will make your work life easier. Here are just five of the best practices from my new report.

Remember your mission

We're not 2.0 for the sake of 2.0. We're implementing carefully chosen social tools that further the mission and vision of the library: Not only does this principle correctly ground your technology planning, it paves the way for buy-in at all levels. Look at Moraine Valley Community College in Palos Hills, Illinois: Their library's posted podcast policies are a good example of how to connect the use of a 2.0 technology back to the mission of the library: enhancing the classroom experience, participating in library events, and keeping an archive of what has happened at the library.

Be selective

It's easy to think your library should suddenly take on every tool and every new service that blogging librarians and conference speakers are discussing. That should not be the case! Create a 2.0 project timeline featuring the tool you'd most like to incorporate.

Make it short but detailed: research, exploration, prototyping, testing, and implementation. Create an emerging technology committee or technology trends team. Have good meetings—without endless agendas lacking action plans and deliverables. Make solid decisions based on evidence. Mine the biblioblogosphere for even more useful evidence and "in the trenches" thinking.

Beware technolust

Don't let "Oh, shiny!" catch you. Implement technology as a means to serve users, not for coolness. Be wary of a massive purchase of technology as a means to improve workflows, staff productivity, and even morale. Purchasing, for example, 12 units of the latest and greatest PDA phone for the entire library management group sounds good, but do they all need it? Will it help their jobs? Implement well-planned technologies after careful consideration of use, unintended consequences, and need.



What story can your library tell? What tools might you use?

Tell stories

Use the social tools to tell the real, human story of the library. A good story is worth its weight in gold—especially those that describe how the library changed someone, or how the library improved someone's life. These are the stories that could make or break a library in times of budget crunches. What story can your library tell? What tools might you use? Use

Flickr to tell a visual story. Use your library blog and as many blog authors as you can to create the voice of the library—a sharing voice that is always present with a new story of what might be happening at the library.

Participate!

Folks on the social Web are coming together in exponentially increasing numbers around a million-plus topics to play out parts of their lives online. How will these social connections look after 15 more years of innovation, rapid technological change, faster broadband, and more internet access? Will the library be there? I think the social library will. The transparent, hyperlinked library will meet users at the point of need—in virtual spaces and physical places we can now only dream of. The first steps: Discover. Play. Participation. ■

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