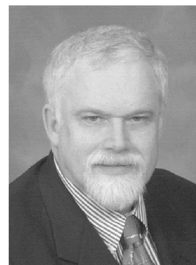


Web 2.0 and Library 2.0: Subscription Agents Respond to New Technology, Trends and Opportunity

Library literature is currently filled with articles on Library 2.0, and recent library conferences have a program track on either Web 2.0 or Library 2.0. Some authors challenge the notion that either of these concepts is actually a new set of software or technology. Some in our industry believe that this is all smoke and mirrors. History will show that there is actually a new movement underway that builds on the library as a service to communities. Web 2.0 will help fashion the next generation of library services.



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Public libraries are foremost in designing new systems that revolve around the concept of Library 2.0; academic libraries are close behind. Real or imaginary, the hot topic in many libraries is Library 2.0, and vendors are jumping on the bandwagon to show evidence of active development. Subscription agents and database companies need a development philosophy that encompasses the Library 2.0 initiatives; they also need to build multi-media applications that take advantage of social interacting. Next in line to use our services is the crowd of new users that have grown up on MySpace, Facebook, Del.icio.us, Frappr and Flicke. These users will be looking for a multi-sensory experience that is common to their world.

Tim O'Reilly and Dale Dougherty are credited with the first use of the concept of Web 2.0 in a series of conferences in 2004. Core functions included collaborating and sharing content through social networking. Library 2.0 is a spinoff of Web 2.0, and Michael Casey is credited with first using the term on his LibraryCrunch blog.

Library 2.0 is user centered and changes the way of designing systems and services to invite high levels of user participation. It is the application of interactive, collaborative and multimedia Web-based technologies to build library-based applications.

Library 2.0 is based on four essential core values:

- it is user centered
- it provides a multimedia experience
- it is socially rich
- it is communicating innovation.

The potential impact of Library 2.0 to library services is extensive. Consider the static and often criticized online catalog that is a major target of Library 2.0 advocates. Picture the online catalog with a new multimedia front end where the user experiences a personalized OPAC that includes access to Instant Messenger, RSS feeds, blogs, wikis and public and

private profiles. The "Amazonization" of the catalog would be a good first start. The library suddenly becomes a place where one can not only search for books and journals, but a place where one can interact with the community. Library 2.0 is not about searching but about finding and sharing.

Many writers predict that Library 2.0 will revolutionize the information services profession, while others refer to Web 2.0 and Library 2.0 as the terrible twos. Libraries are changing their approach to service as users are making demands for a different type of service, while vendors like EBSCO are considering where we can implement Library 2.0 features. We are certainly awake to the rapidly changing community and are working to embrace the changing technologies. We tend not to follow fads but adapt our systems and services as genuine needs arise. One can expect Library 2.0 to impact our database design and our user interfaces.

Web 2.0 and Library 2.0 are "kissing cousins" that offer a new frontier to users, as well as an opportunity to build community. Many library writers predict a major paradigmatic shift for librarianship from our traditional use of OPACs to much more useful collaborative discovery systems, which will enable users to create systems and services for themselves.

So here we are – watching, learning, testing and talking to our user community. As agents, we have to follow the market, be ready to respond to Library 2.0 and stay in constant contact with our users so that we are equipped to meet their future needs. So from our standpoint, Library 2.0 is real – because it is real to our customers and we take new trends, technology and opportunity seriously.

What will Library 3.0 be to our customers? To infinity and beyond may become our rallying cry as users make demands for new and improved services built on Library 2.0 technology. It is indeed an exciting time to be serving libraries.