

Putting Your Library “Out There”

“We are the fun, friendly librarians of the Tutt Library at Colorado College, Colorado Springs. Our icon is a picture of a statue of Charles L. Tutt, the library’s namesake.”

—Colorado College Tutt Library’s Flickr Profile

What a trip this has been! I’ve gone through just five social tools that can improve a library’s online presence. After reading this issue, you’ve seen virtually free software and systems that can add value to what we do best: organizing information and affording access wherever our users may be.

The authors of the *The Cluetrain Manifesto* say that markets are conversations. They also say, “De-cloaking, getting personal: We are those markets. We want to talk to you.”

If our users are experiencing a new, living Web, shouldn’t they find us waiting for them? Shouldn’t we be ready to assist or point the way? Or be ready to collaborate on some cool new thing? Are we ready to put ourselves out there through blogs, IM, and Flickr?

The best advice I can offer to you and your colleagues at your library: Do not be afraid of this! As we shift to a landscape of continuous computing, there will be unique opportunities to build resources and connections online—to put our data out there so it can be shared and mashed up. So don’t be shy. I would never advocate for an individual to go beyond his or her comfort level, so maybe try a group activity first! You may also find a community just for you, beyond the library field’s professional one, that is a perfect fit. Try it out! Share some photos. Contribute to a library wiki.

No matter how you get started, keep in the mind the mantra: Let us, as librarians, the navigators of the Information Age, help grow communities, all kinds of communities, professional and personal—from librarians who create trading cards, to folks who like Macs, to people who love their dogs—and let’s meet up and swap stories, both online and in person! Come in, the water is fine.

Ten Steps for Staff Buy-In for Technology Projects

One of the most important things library directors and administration should recognize is, however you roll out projects or implementations, these rollouts directly impact library staff. They take the brunt of the change, so keep your staff members informed and ask for their input. Library staff members are not going to care about *Technology X* if their usual response is, “No one tells us anything,” when confronted with change. Use these steps to improve new projects at your library.

#1: Listen to Your Staff

Remember the *Cluetrain*? There are conversations going on in your libraries, some in person—I would call that “Elevator talk”—and some via electronic means. What’s being said? Are people unhappy? Have you surprised the staff with yet another big project that just seems to be spending money and time for no discernible ROI? When you meet with folks, listen. The message may come through if you want to hear it: *Communicate . . . Keep us in the know . . . Let us plan with you. . . .* Try internal blogs and wikis for projects that all staff can have access to and comment on.

Roy Tennant wrote about “agile organizations”:

Good communication within the organization—both from above and below—is essential. Communication should not be stifled by over-controlling management or by resentful staff. An agile organization offers many avenues of communication. Line staff must have ways to bring issues to management’s attention, and managers must

promulgate decisions without delay to all staff. Nothing harms the esprit de corps of an organization quicker, or with worse effect, than regularly hearing about an internal decision from an external source. Similarly, management should not have to discover front-line problems from customers.¹

Ten Steps for Staff Buy-In

www.flickr.com/photos/michaelsphotos/sets/72057594085037908

Emerging Technology Committee Post at TTW

http://tametheweb.com/2005/11/emerging_technology_committee.html

#2: Involve Staff in Planning

From the get-go, convene a team—comprised of staff members from all areas of your organization, focusing on the key players and the stakeholders—to plan whatever new thing your library is going to be doing. If they are engaged, heard, and actively researching, discussing, and making decisions, they are and will continue to be wedded to the project. This is particularly true for technology projects and new buildings.

#3: Tell Stories

I've talked about this a lot: one way for libraries to promote their value and relevance is to tell the library's story every chance you get. Beyond daunting columns of statistics, users—and staff—might benefit from a story about "How the library helped its users today." Ponder a staff exchange during which internal stories can be told via a wiki or blog. You may find a lot of answers to the question: "Why are we doing this?"

#4: Be Transparent

Don't be secretive about projects. Don't ambush staff with a new computer on the reference desk no one was told about. Be transparent with your staff as well as with your users. Staff intranets cry out to be used as a means to announce and discuss new projects, with facts, figures, costs, and outcomes. Staff wikis scream to be used to develop plans and timelines for all staff to access and review.

#5: Report and Debrief

"We began by going around the room, with each participant sharing top trends/learning/issues/thoughts from their conference. I wrote them on the whiteboard. By the end we had twenty-five different points." (From "Debriefing and Sharing" post on the Tame the Web.)²

I love this example of the post-conference debrief we did at SJCPL. Staff members often wonder what folks

are doing trooping off to Seattle, Washington, D.C., or Monterey. Reporting from the conference via a staff-development blog, or posting reports to the staff wiki upon returning to work lets folks see that those attending conferences are gathering knowledge to bring back to the institution.

#6: Do Your Research

There is no excuse in 2006 not to be "in the know" on a technology initiative you are planning. There's no excuse not to have done a literature search for articles in the field's professional literature base; these abundant resources will help the discussion and inform the participants of strategy meetings. We have tools available to us. Librarian bloggers and others actively write about technology topics that can help us plan. We are not alone!

#7: Manage Projects Well

Have good meetings. Do not get bogged down in long project timelines. Web 2.0 and the current climate of constant change demands we *do not* take twelve months to redesign a library Web site. Make folks accountable for research, timely decisions, and doable but quick rollouts. Do not overthink!

#8: Formally Convene the Emerging Technology Group

Bring together some of your newer librarians with the seasoned staff members who are interested, and create a *Think Tank*, *R&D Department*, or the inspirational *Emerging Technology Committee* to look at all these new tools. Send some folks to conferences. They may become inspired! Let this group experiment in a techno-playground of blogs, RSS, wikis, Flickr, and so forth, and report to all staff members what could be fruitful, new directions for the library.

#9: Training 2.0: Let Everyone Play and Experience

The concept of the sandbox has really caught on. Experiential training may be the next wave in our 2.0 world. Instead of rote steps and procedures, make sure you are cultivating an organization of learners who are curious and unafraid of change.

Create a sandbox server with wiki software and more. Let staff try things out. Adding new devices or hardware? Let staff try those out as well. For that gaming initiative, take folks out to the arcade or set up the consoles in the staff lounge and do some Dance Dance Revolution (DDR)! Let them experience it all first!

#10: Celebrate Successes

Do you do this? Do you stop amidst all of your ongoing technology projects and celebrate the launch of the new Web site? The new service? Do you congratulate each other? Try it.

Learn all the time without even thinking about it. We are born to learn, but somewhere along the way many of us pick up the idea that we must be taught in order to learn. We think that if someone doesn't stand up in front of us and talk to us with either a chalkboard or PowerPoint slides, we cannot learn. We must regain our sense of wonder and our desire to learn.

Roy Tennant, "Strategies for Keeping Current," *Library Journal*, 9/15/2003, p. 28.

The Librarian's Reading List

The Cluetrain Manifesto, www.cluetrain.com

The Future of Music by David Kusek and Gerd Leonherd

Got Game by John Beck

How Libraries and Librarians Help by Joan Durrance and Karen Fisher

Technology, Planning, Libraries, and Librarians

Stephen Abram and Judy Luther, "Born with a Chip," *Library Journal* 129, no. 8 (2004): 24-37.

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T. Link, "Beneath the Surface: The Unintended Circumstances of Information Technology," *Journal of Library Administration*, 26 no. 3/4: 169-92.

S. Nelson and D. Mayo, *Wired for the Future*. (Chicago: American Library Association, 1999).

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A. P. Wilson, "Customer Service through Technology," *Public Libraries* 43, no. 2 (2004): 94-6.

Library 2.0 and Librarian 2.0

L2 Reading List, www.squidoo.com/library20

ALA TechSource Blog, www.techsource.ala.org/blog

Jason Boog, "Library 2.0 Movement Sees Benefits in Collaboration with Patrons," *Publish* (2005), www.publish.com/article2/0,1895,1881893,00.asp (accessed June 7, 2006).

John Blyberg, "11 reasons Why Library 2.0 Exists and Matters," *Blyberg.net* (January 9, 2006), www.blyberg.net/2006/01/09/11-reasons-why-library-20-exists-and-matters (accessed June 7, 2006).

Michael Casey, *Library Crunch Blog: Bringing You a Library 2.0 Perspective*, www.librarycrunch.com (accessed June 7, 2006).

Ken Chad and Paul Miller, "Do Libraries Matter?: The Rise of Library 2.0," *A White Paper*, v. 1.0 (November 2005), www.talis.com/downloads/white_papers/DoLibrariesMatter.pdf (accessed June 7, 2006).

Christopher Harris, "SL2.0: Synthesis 2.0," *Infomancy*

Blog (January 10, 2006), <http://schoolof.info/infomancy/?p=129> (accessed June 7, 2006).

Ibid., "School Library 2.0," *School Library Journal* (May 1, 2006), www.schoollibraryjournal.com/article/CA6330755.html (accessed June 7, 2006).

Jenny Levine, "Library 2.0 in the Real World," ALA TechSource Blog (January 30, 2006), www.techsource.ala.org/blog/2006/01/library-20-in-the-real-world.html (accessed June 7, 2006).

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Social Software and Social Sites

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Notes

1. Roy Tennant, "Building Agile Organizations," *Library Journal* (April 15, 2001), www.libraryjournal.com/article/CA71785.html (accessed June 7, 2006).
2. Michael Stephens, "Debriefing & Sharing: 3 Conferences," Tame the Web (April 27, 2005), http://tametheweb.com/2005/04/debriefing_sharing_3_library_c.html (accessed June 8, 2006).

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