

# The Ongoing Web Revolution

The Web has changed. It's rebooted and become more engaging, interactive, and participatory. We're still in the midst of that change as media, big business, academic institutions, and other entities grapple with what it means to live in a time when blogs, image-sharing sites, and social networks make communication and connections so easy.

Librarians have been exploring this shift for some time via articles, the biblioblogosphere, and conference presentations. For example, in the opening day keynote address at the 2007 Computers in Libraries conference, Pew Internet and American Life researcher Lee Rainie detailed six hallmarks of the ongoing Web 2.0 shift:

1. The Internet has become the computer.
2. Tens of millions of Americans, especially the young, are creating and sharing content online.
3. Even more Internet users are accessing content created by others.
4. Many are sharing what they know and what they feel online.
5. People are commenting and sharing their knowledge and content online.
6. Americans are customizing their content and online experience, thanks to Web 2.0.<sup>1</sup>

We've moved online with applications that allow us to do what we used to do on our desktop machines. In that move, young people have discovered the ease of content creation and dissemination, while many more people browse that content—and chime in with comments or new content of their own. Rainie's points all address this increased level of online participation, which we've seen described in articles such as *Time* magazine's cover story that designated "You" as the Person of the Year.<sup>2</sup> "You

control the Information Age" boldly stated that cover—not libraries and not librarians.

In the introductory article, Lev Grossman introduced the concept of global collaboration and noted, "The tool that makes this possible is the World Wide Web." He continued:

Not the Web that Tim Berners-Lee hacked together (15 years ago, according to Wikipedia) as a way for scientists to share research. It's not even the over-hyped dotcom Web of the late 1990s. The new Web is a very different thing. It's a tool for bringing together the small contributions of millions of people and making them matter. Silicon Valley consultants call it Web 2.0, as if it were a new version of some old software. But it's really a revolution.<sup>3</sup>

## The Web Is Us

Many readers probably saw the Web 2.0 video "Web 2.0 . . . The Machine Is Us/ing Us" by Michael Wesch, assistant professor of cultural anthropology at Kansas State University.<sup>4</sup> In 4 minutes 31 seconds, Wesch demonstrates the potential of the Web by playing with hypertext—linking, making connections, and illustrating perfectly the human aspect of Web 2.0: connections, conversations, presence, and feeling. Today's Web is linking people, and the potential is exciting. I've shown the video in my classes and led lively discussions afterward. The video concludes with thought-provoking statements, including a plea for us to rethink copyright, authorship, identity, ethics, and privacy.

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I look for humanity's need to be social as it's tied to technology in the information world, especially the way libraries could become significantly more important in so many peoples' lives in so many simple ways. It's not that libraries can't adapt, it's often that people won't adopt new ways of being without realizing they don't have to change.

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Lee LaBlanc, "What Do Conversations, Wireless & Personal Connections Have in Common . . . with Libraries?" *Bibliodex*, July 21, 2007, <http://bibliodex.blogspot.com/2007/07/what-do-conversations-wireless-personal.html>

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These concepts are important for the work we do. As issues surrounding copyright and authority cause us to examine foundational practices in libraries, Web 2.0 content creators are "mashing up" new versions of movie trailers, songs, or television shows. These Web denizens are also sharing varying levels of their lives online—as librarians still focus on how to protect the privacy of the users. In this age, it's more important to offer our users a choice to opt in—to participate, if they so desire, by sharing and using their library data.

If you haven't yet viewed the video, take a look. (The URL is listed in the Resources box at the end of this chapter.) Use it to start a conversation at your next staff meeting or emerging technology group session. What do libraries need to rethink?

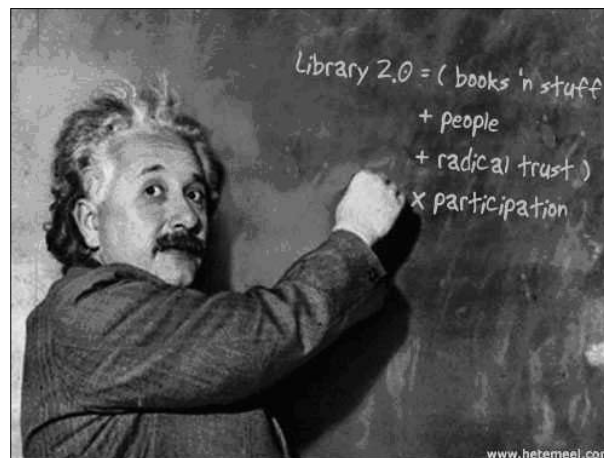
## Are You Participating?

What are some of the most important ingredients in this new Web? I'm reminded of Darlene Fichter's original definition of Library 2.0 at the 2006 Computers in Libraries conference (see figure 1):

Library 2.0 = (books 'n stuff + people + radical trust) × participation<sup>5</sup>

Libraries do well at providing access to materials ("books 'n stuff"). We also have librarians and staff eager to serve users ("people"). The remaining concepts—trust and participation—are the ones we're dealing with now, and they are key to the 2.0 shift. At the *School Library Journal* Leadership Summit in November 2006, a Post-it Note went up on our group's collaborative whiteboard during a breakout session: **"Trust drives change."** This concept is key thinking for social computing.

So much of collaborative technology depends on trust. In the best organizations, staff members feel secure that their decisions will be supported by the folks above. Forbidding staff members to publish to the library blog, for example, because you can't control what they might say is not trust, let alone radical trust.



**Figure 1**  
Darlene Fichter's definition of Library 2.0.

How can libraries demonstrate their trust in users—and staff? What tools can and should we use? What conversations should we have in open forums? How should we respond to criticism? How do we listen to our members and act quickly to make things better?

To begin to answer these questions, take a lesson from the organizations and individuals presented in this issue of *Library Technology Reports* that are building collaborative services for their users: the Ann Arbor District Library, for example. Recently, director Josie Parker posted to her blog at the library's Web site.<sup>6</sup> She discussed the first two years of the new AADL.org and the success the library achieved through blogging, the social OPAC, and commenting. What was the key to this success, which has garnered AADL note around the world in LIS circles?

We trust our staff, and we know that when we expect the best of people that is usually what we get. Allowing staff to post in an unmoderated fashion has worked well and they produce great content. We have had only one incident of profanity posted on the site by a patron and that was during the first quarter after launch. We post all comments from patrons and our responses directly on the site in a searchable database. 96 staff members have contributed un-moderated posts and content to the site. Our rules are simple. Keep it factual, simple, direct and about library related business.

Any library can follow these simple rules. Make them part of your blogging best practices as you plan for participation at all levels. Communicate the mission, vision, and purpose of the library's social participation and then trust the staff to go forth and blog, build wikis, or interact with library users in other ways via other tools.

This trust will make participation possible. Participation is the element that “scales up” Library 2.0 in Fichter’s definition. It has three important aspects:

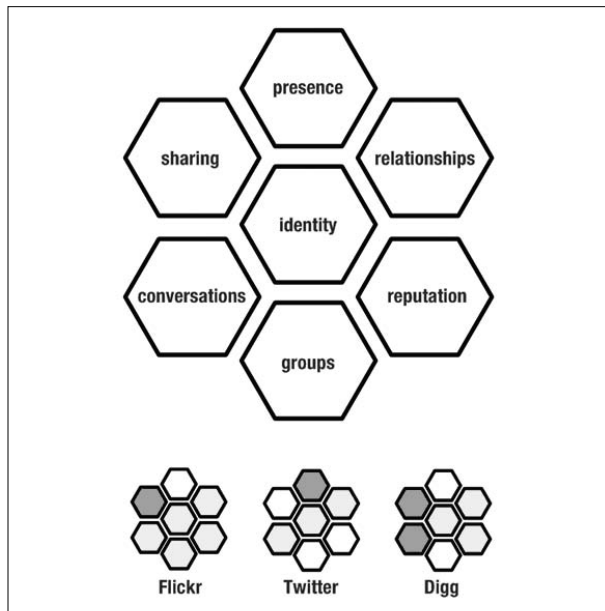
- **Participation by library staff**—We need to understand the tools, use them, and recognize their significance to library services. A well-trained staff is the key to utilizing social technologies.
- **Participation by library users**—We need offer on-line spaces for our users to do what they have come to expect on the World Wide Web—participate, create, play—and give them reasons to do so.
- **Participation within our systems**—We need to create systems and spaces for library users and library staff to interact. Content might be created here. Connections will be made. Stories will be told and kept. We also need to explore systems already in place where the library might have presence.

## More Building Blocks

For another angle on social tools on the Web, take a look at Gene Smith’s “Social Software Building Blocks”<sup>7</sup> Citing early work by Matt Webb and Stewart Butterfield and inspiration from *Ambient Findability* author Peter Morville, Smith presents seven building blocks as “a solid foundation for thinking about how social software works” (see figure 2):

- **Identity**—a way of uniquely identifying people in the system
- **Presence**—a way of knowing who is online, available, or otherwise nearby
- **Relationships**—a way of describing how two users in the system are related (e.g. in Flickr, people can be contacts, friends, or family)
- **Conversations**—a way of talking to other people through the system
- **Groups**—a way of forming communities of interest
- **Reputation**—a way of knowing the status of other people in the system (Who’s a good citizen? Who can be trusted?)
- **Sharing**—a way of sharing things that are meaningful to participants (like photos or videos)

How can library systems and library Web sites include these building blocks? We are lucky to have some innovative libraries blazing new trails at the very edge of our markets. We can learn from them, scale the mechanisms to our size library with our level of funding, AND meet our users in engaging spaces online.



**Figure 2**  
Gene Smith’s diagram of social software building blocks and examples of current networks and their principal features.

## Subtle & Social

*Before they even arrive on campus, we have a chance to make a positive impression—to stake out our claim that this isn’t a typical library. I’ve already had a few questions directed my way from seemingly random students, as well as a few friend requests. So for those of you who feel students don’t want to interact with us on Facebook, maybe it’s your approach. There is something to be said for the subtle art of conversation. Listen first, then talk. (Not the other way around).*

Brian Mathews, “Making a Good Impression: Facebook & Incoming Freshmen,” *The Ubiquitous Librarian*, July 2, 2007, [http://theubiquitouslibrarian.typepad.com/the\\_ubiquitous\\_librarian/2007/07/making-a-good-f.html](http://theubiquitouslibrarian.typepad.com/the_ubiquitous_librarian/2007/07/making-a-good-f.html)

Libraries incorporating the building blocks include, for example:

- **Identity**—Hennepin County Library’s BookSpace allows users to create a profile and personalized reading lists.
- **Presence**—Darien Library embeds a Meebo Me instant messaging widget in the Contact Us page, putting the librarian at one point of entry for many of their Web site users.

- **Relationships**—Students make the University Librarian at McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, a friend on Facebook.
- **Conversations**—Library patrons exchange stories about their own canine friends within the comments-enabled catalog entry for *Marley & Me* at Hennepin County’s catalog.
- **Groups**—The teen gamers at Ann Arbor District Library discuss the tournaments and chide each other via the library’s AXIS blog.
- **Reputation**—Georgia Tech librarian Brian Mathews is queried by students via Facebook.
- **Sharing**—Library patrons contribute images for the Public Library of Charlotte Mecklenburg’s “Foto Fun” program during National Library Week.

column, “The Transparent Library,” for *Library Journal*. In our introductory column, we defined that type of library as one that “has no secrets”—a library that is “connected, breeding the expectation for open conversation.” In our vision, the transparent library establishes ways for our users to talk with us and with each other using the tools discussed here as well as through “community open houses, outreach events, and surveys.”<sup>8</sup>

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*Society has determined what the library of the past has been, and it is society that will determine what the library of the future shall be.*

Jesse Hauk Shera, *The Foundations of Education for Librarianship* (John Wiley & Sons, 1972), p. 135

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*Hennepin County Library’s BookSpace*  
[www.hclib.org/pub/bookspace](http://www.hclib.org/pub/bookspace)

*Darien Library Contact Us Page*  
[www.darienlibrary.org/contact.php](http://www.darienlibrary.org/contact.php)

*McMaster University Libraries*  
<http://library.mcmaster.ca>

*Hennepin County Library’s Marley & Me Discussion*  
[www.hclib.org/pub/bookspace/discuss/?bib=1115372](http://www.hclib.org/pub/bookspace/discuss/?bib=1115372)

*AXIS*  
[www.aadl.org/axis](http://www.aadl.org/axis)

*The Ubiquitous Librarian (Brian Mathews)*  
<http://theubiquitouslibrarian.typepad.com>

*Foto Fun*  
[http://plcmc.org/fotofun2007\\_04\\_06/gallery.asp](http://plcmc.org/fotofun2007_04_06/gallery.asp)

## It’s Still a Conversation

In my previous issue of *Library Technology Reports*, I covered the four “C’s” that Jenny Levine and I present in our Social Tools and Libraries Roadshow: commons, collaboration, conversations, community. These words still resonate for me in the Web 2.0 and Library 2.0 world. We’ve seen a lot of discussions—conversations—play out around what it means to provide an online mechanism for librarians and library users to talk and work together.

Conversations, especially open, honest ones, are foundational in the work Michael Casey and I do with our

## The Social Library

Michael Buckland, professor emeritus at the Information School, University of California, Berkeley, stated *almost fifteen years ago* in his *Redesigning Library Services Manifesto* that new tools were changing what users did with information.<sup>9</sup> He noted that computers are and will be used in ways that fall outside the ideas of traditional usage, beyond the input and output of data. Social computing, that tool kit of new technologies, extends far beyond word processing.

The history of physical and online interaction and conversation in our field is long and varied. Over the years, librarians have used various mechanisms for social interaction and knowledge exchange, from our publications, conferences, and symposia to the online forums and mailing lists such as PUBLIB in the 1990s. With the advent of the new 2.0 technologies, the mechanisms for social interaction and the dissemination of information have improved. Discourse that might have occurred at a conference is now played out via blog posts, comments, trackbacks, and other tools of the new Web.

In *Redesigning Library Services*, Buckland argued that any new technology would have a significant effect on library services and that “a continuing quest for technological improvement has been and should continue to be important.”<sup>10</sup> The concept of “a continuing quest for improvement” can also be applied to learning and using new technologies that can enhance and further our work as well. What is the next step in Buckland’s progression from paper to electronic library? In my mind, it’s a mashup of all that has come before: the online social library.

Last year, I covered blogs, wikis, IM, and Flickr as ways to have conversations and make the library present in user spaces. We have many more tools now, but the ideas remain the same. People can make connec-

tions and talk to each other. A library user might find library resources and a librarian presence in Facebook where services and resources are discussed; follow links to articles and sites via tags at del.icio.us and leave a comment; and—at the point of need—find a librarian available to talk and answer questions via a Meebo Me embedded within a search page. The following chapters will detail what makes up the social library: an awareness of trends influencing the new Web world, some tools that enable participation and conversation, and a look at how to best implement social technologies.

## Web 2.0 Resources

*Ann Arbor District Library Web Site*  
[www.aadl.org](http://www.aadl.org)

*Mashable The Social Networking Blog*  
<http://mashable.com>

*PLCMC's Learning 2.0*  
<http://plcmclearning.blogspot.com>

*Redesigning Library Services: A Manifesto*  
<http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Literature/Library/Redesigning/html.html>

*Time's Person of the Year: You*  
[www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1569514,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1569514,00.html)

*Web 2.0 . . . The Machine Is Using Us*  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=6gmP4nk0EOE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6gmP4nk0EOE)

## Notes

1. Lee Rainie, "Web 2.0 & the Internet World" (keynote address, 22nd annual Computers in Libraries conference, Arlington, VA, April 16–18, 2007); for a full report of his talk, see Michelle Boule, "The Internet Is for Use," ALA TechSource blog, April 23, 2007, [www.techsource.ala.org/blog/2007/04/the-internet-is-for-use.html](http://www.techsource.ala.org/blog/2007/04/the-internet-is-for-use.html) (accessed July 10, 2007).
2. Lev Grossman, "Time's Person of the Year: You," Time, Dec. 13, 2006, available online at [www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1569514,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1569514,00.html) (accessed July 10, 2007).
3. Ibid.
4. Michael Wesch, "Web 2.0 . . . The Machine Is Us/ing Us," Jan. 31, 2007, on the YouTube Web site, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=6gmP4nk0EOE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6gmP4nk0EOE) (accessed July 10, 2007).
5. Darlene Fichter, "Cool Tools for Webmasters," (presentation, 21st annual Computers in Libraries conference, Washington, DC, March 22–24, 2006); see also Darlene Fichter, "Web 2.0, Library 2.0 and Radical Trust: A First Take," Blog on the Side, April 2, 2006, [http://library2.usask.ca/~fichter/blog\\_on\\_the\\_side/2006/04/web2.html](http://library2.usask.ca/~fichter/blog_on_the_side/2006/04/web2.html) (accessed July 10, 2007).
6. Josie Parker, "AADL.org Is Two!" Director's Blog, July 17, 2007, on the Ann Arbor District Library Web site, [www.aadl.org/node/4722](http://www.aadl.org/node/4722) (accessed July 24, 2007).
7. Gene Smith, "Social Software Building Blocks," April 4, 2007, on the nForm Web site, <http://nform.ca/publications/social-software-building-block> (accessed July 13, 2007).
8. Michael Casey & Michael Stephens, "Introducing the Michaels," Library Journal, April 1, 2007, available online at <http://libraryjournal.com/article/CA6429283.html> (accessed July 24, 2007).
9. Michael Buckland, *Redesigning Library Services: A Manifesto* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1992), available online at <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Literature/Library/Redesigning/html.html> (accessed July 10, 2007).
10. Ibid.