Tools from "Web 2.0 & Libraries: Best Practices for Social Software" Revisited

I n "Web 2.0 & Libraries," I presented five 2.0 tools that libraries were using—blogs, RSS, instant messaging, wikis, and Flikr.[1] The choice of these five tools was based on my work with Jenny Levine and our Social Tools and Libraries Roadshow. A lot has happened since the publication of that issue of *Library Technology Reports* last year. This chapter will detail recent innovations with blogs, wikis, and other tools in the world of libraries and social computing. We'll see how the conversations and participation have been carried forward with enhancements and increased use.

Blogs

The blog tracking and searching site Technorati frequently publishes blog statistics. In April 2007, David Sifry posted this informative overview of the blogosphere as tracked by Technorati:

- 70 million weblogs
- about 120,000 new weblogs each day, or 1.4 new blogs every second
- 1.5 million posts per day, or 17 posts per second
- growth from 35 million to 75 million blogs in 320 days[2]

Discussions of library and librarian blogging continue. Many libraries have added a blog to their Web presence. Some libraries moved to content management systems or other platforms and created blog-like sites there. Other libraries found it wasn't working for them, archived their blog, and moved on.

Librarians as well joined the biblioblogosphere to share their voices. My doctoral research focused on these librarians and why they blog. It was fascinating to learn what bibliobloggers identified as motivations for and benefits of blogging. These reasons included participating in a community, sharing expertise, and gaining recognition within the field.

Today, the library blog has become its own platform. Almost anything can be embedded in a blog now: pictures from Flickr, audio, video (YouTube), presentations (SlideShare), chat (Meebo), bookmarks (del.icio.us), calendars (Google, 30 Boxes), text messages (Twitter), and more. It's a micro view of what's happening on the Web in general (Web as operating system). And it's not just mashing up content on this platform, but mashing up services that have traditionally been completely separate, such as SMS or IM.

A library can have a rich, dynamic, multimedia Web site at little or no cost and with little effort just by maintaining a blog. That is a pretty powerful reason to have a blog, especially for small libraries. Adding a blog to a library's Web site also makes the site one where content is expected to change regularly. Pairing blogs and dynamic, updating RSS content can create a low-cost, high-impact Web presence.

From my viewpoint, library blogging showed several trends in the last few months: blogs as value-added Web presence, blogging administrators, and the use of blogs to build useful community Web sites.

Value-added blogging

Across the Web, libraries are finding ways to add value to their online presence through use of a blog. For example, the librarians at Williamsburg Regional Library recently launched Blogging for a Good Book to augment the library's Looking for a Good Book readers' service. From the About page:

Read a new review every day, Monday through Friday! The staff of the Williamsburg Regional Library in Virginia bring you short reviews of books, movies, and more!

Launched in April of 2007, Blogging for a Good Book is the newest facet of the Looking for a Good Book readers' service. A different staff member picks favorite reviews for each different week. Subscribe to our RSS feed to find good reviews, or click on the categories on the righthand side to see everything in your favorite area.[3]

Williamsburg librarian Jessica Zellers wrote a case study of the blog implementation for the July/August/September issue of *Virginia Libraries*. She shared the process of creating the blog—hosted free at Wordpress .com—and described the benefits:[4]

So the blog makes our job as readers' advisors easier; for example, with just one click, we can pull up a list of books that are strong in character that are owned by the library. The blog also develops us as practitioners. Writing a book review need not be time consuming, but it does require discipline. Even though our reviews are casual and usually pretty short, we have to use our professional skills to articulate the appeal of a book. It is marvelously good practice, for the seasoned veteran and the new practitioner alike.

Zellers also noted the importance of the blog for outreach:

Our reviews are reaching people who would not normally benefit from the RA services offered in our physical library. This is not just speculation; we have received comments on the blog from people throughout the country who have reached BFGB, either through a deliberate invitation or through a fortuitous search engine result. Locals are visiting the blog, too; they have told us so in person and through comments on the blog. At the time of this writing, BFGB is receiving approximately 80 hits per day, *not* counting hits that originated within the library.

Better service, improved outreach, professional development, and the job made easier: that's a lot of value added through the creative use of relatively simple Web 2.0 technology.

Blogging administrators

It is nice to see more library administrators take to blogging. At ALA Midwinter, I participated in a lunch conversation with various bibliobloggers hosted by the folks from the Darien Library in Darien, Connecticut. The conversation turned to blogging: blogging libraries, blogging librarians, *and* blogging directors. I hung on Darien Library director Louise Berry's every word about how she views her organization, what it means to be a blogging director, and how she empowers the staff to contribute. As we discussed what it means to be a blogging director in a culture of trust and participation, I realized that eventually boards and other governing bodies are going to be looking for directors, administrators, and deans with experience blogging and using other technologies as well.

Library director 2.0 will hopefully guide open, decentralized, flatter libraries with a human voice using whatever appropriate social tools are at his or her disposal. But participation can seem a little scary. At a state library association meeting last fall, one librarian said to our group: "My director won't blog. She writes four or five drafts of press releases and has our admin team proof it over and over again. I want us to be a *human* library."

I do too.

How cool would it be if the local newspapers syndicated their headlines with an RSS feed so that you could subscribe to them? And blogged "live" from government meetings? And posted dozens of photos (all the ones that didn't make it in this week's paper) on a Flickr account, especially if there was breaking news? OK, we're biased because we want them to do it so that we can feed the headlines, blog posts and photos onto our own Darien Community Matters blog, providing the most balanced, accurate and up-to-date information possible. And I guess that you could say that we're becoming Web 2.0 missionaries. . . . Because we (that's me and Assistant Director Melissa Yurechko) invited Josh Fisher, editor of the Darien Times over to discuss it, as the first of a series of meetings with the local news media.

Louise Berry, "Web 2.0," Darien Library Directors Blog, Aug. 10, 2006, http://www.darienlibrary.org/directorsblog/archives/2006/08/web_20_1.html

Why might library directors blog? What might the benefits be?

- **Improved communication**—Wouldn't it be useful to be able to communicate library news and important details about library business to the most people with an easy-to-use mechanism? It would also set an example, and top-down buy-in is so important for technology projects and organizational shifts.

- **Human interaction**–Some human discourse from the top might be very welcome in many libraries, internally and externally. Open comments would allow discussion.
- **You have cool things to say!**–Tell your story, your day-to-day adventures, your thoughts on the library and its collection. Blog your plans and strategies. This isn't top-secret work, but blogging creates a level of transparency that could benefit many libraries.
- **Your voice is important.**–The voice of library administration carries a lot of weight. Here's what *The Cluetrain Manifesto* says about voice: "But learning to speak in a human voice is not some trick, nor will corporations convince us they are human with lip service about 'listening to customers.' They will only sound human when they empower real human beings to speak on their behalf."[5]

I spend an awful lot of time soliciting and then responding to feedback and suggestions from our users. Lately, the written suggestions in the box asking for "newer" and "better" DVDs have outnumbered the requests for specific books or authors by nearly 12 to 1. My response to the requests for newer, better DVDs has always been that we buy what Blockbuster doesn't—the hard-to-find TV shows—the series, the old shows & films, the BBCAmerica & PBS films—and not the drivel (Oops. I'm showing my bias. Sorry) that appears in the theaters. However, when people request a specific title, whether book, music, movie, or magazine, we'll usually buy it.

I've just finished a lengthy analysis of our collection, including what we buy, how much it's used, and what our users ask for. The not-surprising conclusion I've come to is that DVD and Books on CD are used far more than our print collection. For example, one copy of a bestselling book by John Grisham got 59 circs during the period I was reviewing, while The Sopranos DVD recorded 354 circs. A Book on CD version of the same Grisham novel logged in 153 circs. Clearly, the format of choice is not print. In examining our reference questions logged in that period of time, requests for specific movies or Books on CD outnumbered specific requests for print materials by 5 to 1.

Patricia Uttaro, From the Director . . . : News and Views from the Director of the Ogden Farmers' Library, Sept. 14, 2006, http://ofldirector.blogspot.com/2006/09/i-spend-awful-lot-of-time-soliciting.html

And what other, personal benefits might there be? I asked Jeff Trzeciak, University Librarian at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, his thoughts on blogging for the university library. He replied, "It helps me organize my thoughts.–I think carefully about what I want to say before saying it on my blog. That helps me to craft the message."[6]

I would urge administrators, deans, and directors to dive in and try blogging.

Building a community Web site with a blog

A blog is a great way to build an interesting, interactive community Web site. You don't even have to call it a blog–blog software is flexible, easy to use, and multipurpose. Take a look at Western Springs History for an example of a community Web site, created with blog software, that encourages conversation and participation. (see figure 3). Created by Aaron Schmidt and Jessamyn West, the site uses a Wordpress installation to build a local history archive. Blog categories become street names, and blog entries become address numbers. Many entries include a photograph of the Western Springs residence at that address.

Comments are enabled, allowing Western Springs residents to fill in details on the historic homes they occupy. Talking about this site in the Social Tools and Libraries Roadshow, Jenny Levine points out that who better should fill in a town's local history but the citizens of the town itself!

Blogging Resources

Blogging for a Good Book
http://bfgb.wordpress.com

Darien Library
www.darienlibrary.org

McMaster University Library Blog
http://ulatmac.wordpress.com

Technorati
www.technorati.com

Western Springs History Web Site
www.westernspringshistory.org

WordPress.com
http://wordpress.com

Figure 3
Western Springs History Web site.

LIS Student Blogging

One of my favorite things to introduce LIS students to is blogging. All of my Internet Fundamentals class students get a Wordpress blog for the semester to chronicle their discoveries and opinions. Other LIS professors are doing the same. Steven L. MacCall, associate professor, School of Library and Information Studies at the University of Alabama uses blogs as well. He reports:

We introduced the practice in the context of a weekly writing assignment for the required introductory "Organization of Information" course. In this course, students use the blog platform in a very specific and functional way related to the transferring of regularly occurring course assignments to me. This technique has been very successful because it quickly demystifies the blogging process so that students are not intimidated, but rather turn out to be relieved once they understand that blogging facilitates a very natural and normal writing process: that of journaling weekly writing assignments. In fact, some brag to their husbands/wives/children that they are now bloggers! The downside of this technique is that they are really not

true bloggers in the sense of a blogging community in which RSS feed aggregators are used to subscribe to community members' tagged posts and comments feeds for more real time blog interaction. This level of understanding of the blogging process comes later in more advanced courses. I've found that many students easily transition to a "blogging culture" during advanced courses; however, some students continue to think that blogging is linear, one-way communication, so I find myself having to break these students of the "bad" habits that they acquired in my introductory "Organization of Information" course! (Steven L. McCall, e-mail interview by the author, May 23, 2007)

RSS

RSS (Really Simple Syndication or Rich Site Summary) allows us to put Web content from one place into another with some reasonably simple coding. Among the most notable advances in RSS were the advent of more feature-rich aggregator sites and the inclusion of RSS widgets in sites such as Wordpress and Blogger.

In the past year, RSS has gained a bit more popularity amongst librarians and libraries. Some libraries offer guides and promote the availability of feeds from their resources or databases. A good example is the pages found at the University of Wisconsin–Madison Libraries Web site, which offer definitions, a how-to page, and links to library and campus RSS feeds (see figure 4).

In her blog, Librarian in Black, Sarah Houghton-Jan posted links to RSS resources that go beyond simply using an aggregator:

> There are so many ways to use RSS in the library, beyond simply using it as a professional tool to stay up to date:

- Create pages that use RSS to allow users to stay up to date on what they're interested in (library news, children's events, etc.).
- Use RSS to display headlines from your own blogs and other RSSified content on your library's website.
- Use RSS to display recent additions to the library catalog.

> A lot of times, though, the content we've created isn't RSSified yet. . . . we just have a webpage. And we update it. But no RSS. No problem! There are several tools listed here in this Robin Good article, along with explanation of their features, how they work, and whether they require tech-expertise or not.[7]

Houghton-Jan points to an article by Robin Good entitled "RSS To HTML: How to Convert RSS Feeds into Published Web Pages."[8] The resources in this useful guide for harnessing the power of RSS are plentiful!

Figure 4
University of Wisconsin–Madison Libraries Alerts and RSS Feeds page.

Creating a Librarian's Info-Portal

1. Visit NetVibes at www.netvibes.com and sign up for a free account. All you need are an e-mail address and a password. For your portal, configuring a project-specific e-mail such as portal@yourlibraryserver.org will make it easier for multiple library staff members to edit the portal architecture and content.

2. After creating your initial site structure, you may want to meet with your staff to discuss the portal and decide what might be included. Brainstorm to create a list of library and librarian's blogs, news sites, local content, and any other useful resources you can pull in. The only requirement? The resources you select must have an RSS feed.

3. Name the site by clicking on the page title at the top and typing in a title. Next, name the tab. (NetVibes allows multiple tabs in its portals and we'll use that feature in a bit.)

4. Click on Add Content to get started. A sidebar of tools will appear on the left-hand side. Click on Add Feed and paste the URL for any site's feed into the box that appears. NetVibes will verify the feed and then open the module on the portal page. You can click on the top of each module box, hold the mouse button, and drag them around the page to make whatever layout you desire.
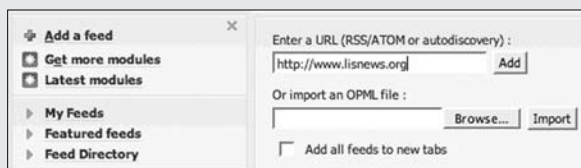
NetVibes Add Content box.

5. Add all of your library blogs and other RSS feeds. Note that the page also includes a Web search module for access to Google, Yahoo! and more.

6. Localize some Content Too

7. Localize the portal by configuring the Weather module to display the local weather and scout out a news feed from the local newspaper, TV station, or news aggregator.

8. Add your library's Flickr feed. Including images is a great way to let staff know what's happening in the library. Copy the feed URL and paste it into the Flickr module. The photos, and all of the feed content on the page, will update automatically. If you don't have a Flickr account, you might add a feed to an appropriate Flickr tag or group, such as the Libraries and Librarians group, to see what other library folk are doing with Flickr. Remember, Flickr is only $25 for a Pro account!

9. Add new tabs to configure other useful pages. For example, a page devoted to library and librarian's blogs might serve as a useful tool for monitoring the discussions there. A calendar module is available as well as a Notes module to create a planning and organizational page.

10. Create a tab for each member of your team. If you have four or five staff members (or more), make a tab in NetVibes for each of them and then allow them to customize the pages with their own content. Each person may want to include their own favorite blog feeds, news sites, keyword searches and more.

11. Explore other modules. Add podcasts to the mix. Insert a Meebo module (automatically placed in a new tab) to have easy access to your library's IM account. Create searches via the search module for topics of interest to staff, which can be pertinent to projects or planning or "ego" searches to see who is saying what about the library out in the blogosphere. Note that you can add fun stuff as well: an analog clock, sudoku puzzles for that quick mental break from library work, and comic strips.

The completed portal using Kankakee Public Library's RSS feeds.

From Rachel Singer Gordon and Michael Stephens, "Creating a Librarian's Info-Portal with NetVibes and RSS," Tech Tips for Every Librarian, *Computers in Libraries*, April 2007.

Creating a librarian's or library portal with RSS

In the department Tech Tips for Every Librarian in *Computers in Libraries* magazine, I detailed the steps for creating a librarian's info-portal with NetVibes and various RSS feeds from social sites.[9]

The example I created for the article was born out of one of the group projects I assign in my Internet Fundamentals class. I used NetVibes to build a resource that your librarians and staff may come to use a lot. See the sidebar on page 20 for a step-by-step breakdown of how to create your own RSS portal.

You could also build more than just an internal portal for staff. Aggregator/do-it-yourself sites such as NetVibes offer a chance to create a dynamically updating library user's portal as well. In the Roadshow, Jenny Levine demonstrates this point by using SuprGlu to build an automatically updating site for a local library by harnessing various feeds. What does this approach do for the social library? It uses the power of Web 2.0 to create sites that require little upkeep once the feeds are in place.

RSS Resources

Alerts and RSS Feeds Page of the University of Wisconsin–Madison Libraries
www.library.wisc.edu/alerts/rss-alert-guides.html

NetVibes
www.netvibes.com

SuprGlu
www.suprglu.com

Instant Messaging

Have you launched your own instant messaging "ask a librarian" service and added it to your work flow? Have you tried using IM to communicate with colleagues all over the world? Last time we covered IM, I presented my FASTER model, for any type or size of library.[10] This model addresses questions about implementation, work flow and training:

- F is for going with Flow at your reference desk.
- A is for Asking questions as in any reference transaction.
- S is for the variety of Software available to access IM accounts.
- T is for making sure your staff gets IM Training.
- E is for Easy—easy to use and easy for patrons to find you.
- R is for the great Return on investment you'll get from this low-cost service.

It is important to consider the last step—the ROI—as well as how to evaluate the service. As more libraries test the IM waters, the most useful evidence will be how the service is marketed, how users find it, and what benefits they reap.

IM at UIUC

Kathleen Kern, assistant reference librarian, assistant professor of library administration, and virtual reference coordinator, Central Reference Services at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign library, spoke with me about their IM reference service.[11] The university library uses both vendor-supplied virtual reference software and IM to answer questions. The service is staffed with librarians and with GSLIS graduate students, who are also paid for their work.

"Our stats for IM vary greatly by time of the year," she reported. "In 2006, we had 5270 IMs. IM + chat (Docutek) was 7059. IM was 75% of the total questions asked through VR." She also noted that the librarians do not count e-mail as virtual reference, but there were 3,667 e-mails answered by central reference. The VR statistics are for the undergraduate library and the central reference desk. Kern described the library's busiest month: "In October of 2006 we had 935 IM and 1157 IM + chat. April 2007 was a not-too-distant second with 773 IMs and 1042 IM + chat. October and April are always the peak months for VR, as they are for in-person reference."

The lowest statistics came in June 2005 with IM = 65 and IM + chat = 57. The lowest numbers for 2006 were in July with IM = 111 and IM + chat = 225. "During the peak months IM = 75–80% of our total VR and during the slower months IM can be as low as 50% of our VR," Kern noted. "This fluctuate seems to reasonably correlate with what we know about the faculty/grad and undergraduate user groups in terms of when they do their work."

Chat ranges from 100 to 300 interactions a month, whereas IM ranges from 65 to over 950 a month. Kern and librarian David Ward discussed reasons for this in their article "Combining IM and Vendor-Based Chat: A Report from the Frontlines of an Integrated Service Portal" in *Libraries and the Academy*.[12]

What about buy-in from students and faculty? "I'd say that the buy-in is tremendous," Kern noted. "IM is certainly much more heavily used by undergraduates than by graduate students or faculty. We think that this is shifting a little, but have not collected the data." Because IM has a much higher percentage of undergrad users, the librarians have retained the Docutek software. "This summer, we are piloting Meebo and I expect that this will replace Docutek by the fall," Kern reported. "The response to the widget has been good, from both patrons and librarians. I have not looked at the data yet, but I am anticipating a shift from IM to the Meebo widget since it is so visible and easy."[13]

I've been asked a lot about our success, especially relative to other stand-alone services. I am still a little stumped, but I think that our user base (36K+ students, and several thousand faculty and staff) plays a role. Our campus is the size of a small city. Alums also use our service

We've had few restrictions on use of the service. We cannot provide non-affiliates with access to our databases and we limit how much time we spend with them (so that we can focus on our students, faculty, etc.) but we try to point them in the right direction. We have never limited the service to "ready reference" so from the start our patrons have known that they can ask us anything.

We have long hours of service which closely mirror our open hours for the library building and the hours of our Central Reference and Information Desk—less 1/2 hour for opening and closing. We've recently expanded the service hours and our Undergraduate Library staffs until midnight during the school year, adding 1.5 hours a day of service Sunday–Thursday.

M. Kathleen Kern, e-mail interview by the author, July 6, 2007

Marketing UIUC's IM service

"Marketing has been light, but the service is mentioned in workshops and I think that there is a lot of word-of-mouth," Kern told me. "Since we staff the service from the reference desks in the Undergrad and Central Reference InfoDesk, we are able to raise in-person patron awareness of the service. Some of the graduate assistants have also been great about talking up the service to patrons. The librarians also use promotional Post-it Note pads, business cards and Flickr cards to raise awareness.

"Most important to our volume has been the product placement aspect. The library has either Ask A Librarian or Library Help as a link from all of the library's Web pages and within the online catalog," stated Kern.

Kern has no fear of success: "We are planning to market in the fall and one of my colleagues asked if that was ok with me since it may bump up our volume. I said that we should be so lucky and no one would ever say 'we can't circulate so many books; let's buy less.' It will likely create a workflow problem for us and I will need to figure out some staffing scenarios, but it is a happy problem to have."[14]

Meebo

There have been some interesting new twists on IM on the Web of late. As Kern mentioned, instant messaging is

The most serious security concern comes from file transfers. At our library, staff members are using either Trillian, which we set to not accept file transfers, or Meebo, which doesn't yet support file transfers. The second security concern involves clicking on links. We have asked people to be as careful about doing that as they are about clicking on attachments to email—or more careful since some viruses can apparently mask themselves as a person on your IM buddy list.

Joy Weese Moll, "IM a Librarian," Wanderings of an Online Librarian, Sept. 6, 2006, http://joy.mollprojects.com/myblogs/wanderings/2006/09/im-librarian.html

now being embedded in Web pages and blogs via the use of Meebo and the Meebo Me widget.

Meebo is an IM aggregator that can access all of your IM accounts, like Trillian or Gaim. BUT it's Web-based. You can access your accounts without installing any desktop IM client (see figure 5). The IM windows and buddy lists open inside the Web window. Meebo Me creates the HTML code to embed an IM window in any Web page: your library blog or wiki, or your library's classic Contact Us page—anywhere you'd like the library to be present.

Meebo.com is a website for instant messaging from absolutely anywhere. Whether you're at home, on campus, at work, or traveling foreign lands, hop over to meebo.com on any computer to access all of your buddies and chat with them, no downloads or installs required, for free!

About page, Meebo.com, http://blog.meebo.com/?page_id=205

Benefits of using Meebo include

- Viruses cannot get through the Web interface.
- You have easy access to all of your IM accounts in one place.
- Anyone can IM you even when you are not online.

Meebo will also create a Web-based chat room to use with colleagues or library users. You can configure the room, invite buddies, and display video inside the space. Librarians might use the rooms for planning with colleagues or for chatting online with groups of library users.

Meebo Me

Meebo's help page describes Meebo Me as "a small chat window that you can put on your webpage for visitors

to talk with you. . . . Your buddy list at meebo.com will light up when someone visits your page and then you can double click on their name to strike up a conversation. In one click, no registration or download required, visitors can start typing in the chat window on your page to talk with you."[15] See the Darien Library Contact Us page for a great example of a Meebo Me widget embedded in a library Web site.

The next step for the embedded librarian

What's the next step? I'd like to see this type of IM functionality taken even further—with the help of our vendors. Just imagine! We could embed an IM librarian on every results page of a catalog or database search. This would definitely place the librarian at the point of need with our users.

Inserting a Meebo Me widget is easy. The simple process includes configuring the name of your widget, choosing the dimensions and colors of your widget, and entering your Meebo account information. The code you need to embed your widget is generated and can be pasted wherever you'd like a presence for your IM librarian.

Take a look at what some libraries are doing with Meebo and Meebo Me at the LibSuccess Wiki. Putting the library at the point of need of your users via a simple, seamless interface is easy and within reach of any size library!

Administrators and IM

Above we noted the increasing numbers of directors and library administrators sharing their voice via blogs. Check out the Meebo Me–crafted IM box for Todd Stephens, County Librarian for South Carolina's Spartanburg County (see figure 6). He is in the forefront–one of the first library administrators to be available to patrons via IM.

IM Resources

Darien Library Contact Page
www.darienlibrary.org/contact.php

LibSuccess Wiki
www.libsuccess.org

Meebo
www.meebo.com

Meebo Me
www.meebome.com

Todd Stephens IM Box
www.infodepot.org/zUsing/AskLibIM.asp

UIUC Ask Us Page
www.library.uiuc.edu/askus

Figure 5
Meebo.com login page.

Wikis

Wiki software is another 2.0 tool that does all dirty work of building Web pages. Wikis can be edited via a Web interface by anyone with access to the software. "Anyone" could be just you, your department or library, or the world at large. Wikis offer easy collaboration and a way to track changes on wiki-generated pages. Librarians can use simple wiki software to edit documents, create Web sites, and share data. No more e-mailing a document back and forth or using Track Changes in Word.

Ponder your goal. Do you have some group work to do? A policy manual rewrite? A knowledge base for the library system? Training documents? Do you want to build any type of shared resource with a group of librarians? If so, a wiki may be the perfect solution.

Don't even tell them it's a wiki!

Wikis, however, require a bit more know-how than blogs or IM—and feature a slightly steeper learning curve. In our Social Tools and Libraries Roadshow, Jenny Levine tells the crowd that she can't wait to see the next incarnation of wiki software: easy, intuitive, and fluid, like an ultra-deluxe WYSIWYG interface. That certainly will make our group work even easier.

Current wiki tools, however, can be very useful for library-related projects. And they can be presented in a way that will not intimidate. Take, for example, the "New Phone Training" on a wiki at the Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana. It is a well-designed instructional tool, featuring a FAQ, a useful guide to setting up and retrieving voice mail, and pages devoted to every aspect of the new phone system. It is clean, easy to

Figure 6
IM box for Spartanburg County's County Librarian Todd Stephens.

navigate and use, and on the front page, there is a note from the creators: "Don't be scared of the word 'wiki'—this is just a Web page . . . :)"[16]

The ACPL also uses a wiki for the group work of its "Digital Collective." Check out the ACPL Digital Collective for a perfect example of using a wiki to organize, annotate, and share technology planning and more (see figure 7).

Wikis—The next level of participation

At the June 2007 American Library Association conference, Matthew Bejune, assistant professor of library science at Purdue University Libraries, spoke about his research on wiki use in libraries.[17] His findings will appear in a future issue of *Information Technology and Libraries*. According to Bejune, library wikis can be classified in one of four groups:

1. collaboration between libraries
2. collaboration between library staff (internal)
3. collaboration between staff and patrons
4. collaboration between patrons

Bejune noted that groups 1 and 2 combined make up about 76 percent of all library wiki use. He suggested some questions to keep in mind as we move forward with wikis:

- Why aren't we more in category 3 or 4?
- How might we enable patrons to build or modify a library's information?
- How will libraries next use wikis?[18]

"Experimentation seems to be one of the best methods for furthering the use of wikis in libraries," Bejune said in an e-mail interview. "Consider LibraryWikis as an example. When I set out to do my research I did not intend to create a wiki as a companion to my research article. However, as my research progressed it became clear that a wiki would be an ideal way to experiment with the technology, for myself and for the broader library community."[19]

The LibraryWikis site goes beyond being merely a playground, however. It is also a repository of examples of wikis used in libraries. Wikis are being used in a number of ways. Bejune focused on how they are used to support collaboration documented in his four main types: "Anyone who is looking to create a library wiki should start with the list of examples found on LibraryWikis. And after a new library wiki is created, share the wiki with the library community by adding it to LibraryWikis."[20]

Bejune also noted that wikis are becoming easier to use: "Easier than creating a web site," he said. "Because of this, the library community should take advantage of this technology experimenting with wikis for a great num-

ber of purposes. What is most important at this time is to feel free with experimenting with wikis to help get us to the next level. Who knows you may have the next best idea for a library wiki."[21]

Community spaces

Library wikis can be used for more than group work by librarians and other library staff. Some libraries are also creating wiki spaces for patrons. One example is the Stevens County Rural Library District in Washington State. From the site:

What is the Stevens County Wiki Project? I'm glad you asked! The wiki project is dedicated to creating an online wiki guide to Stevens County, Washington, USA. We hope that all of you who know and love the area will contribute your knowledge to the wiki and all our visitors may learn more about Stevens County. If you like this site, please tell your friends! The more people who get involved, the better this guide will be.[22]

The guidelines for this wiki provide an overview of how to use and contribute to the resources, tell users what not to do, and urge contributors to have FUN. Business guidelines give details on how local businesses can contribute, including: "In a wiki, all users decide what is relevant and appropriate. In the case of disputes, however, this judgement is deferred to the wiki administrators."[23]

For more information, visit the Guidelines page (listed in the Wiki Resources box below).

Wiki Resources

Allen County Public Library Digital Collective Blogs List
http://acpldc.pbwiki.com/ACPL_blogs

Chad Haefele's Coverage of the Wiki Session at ALA
www.hiddenpeanuts.com/archives/2007/06/24/ala-2007-harnessing-the-hive-social-networks-libraries

LibraryWikis
http://librarywikis.pbwiki.com

PBwiki
http://pbwiki.com

SCRLD Wiki Project: Main Page
www.scrldwiki.org/index.php/Main_Page

SCRLD Wiki Project: Guidelines Page
www.scrldwiki.org/index.php/Main_Page, under "Contacts and Contributions, Guidelines for Contributing to the Wiki"

Figure 7
List of blogs compiled by the ACPL Digital Collective.

Flickr

As my issue of *Library Technology Reports* was going to press last summer, I was alerted to the fact that libraries with Flickr accounts were being targeted by anonymous e-mailers urging them to cancel their participation in Yahoo's "adult amateur porn site." I wrote a TechSource post that day, which included:

> I ask that you do not make any spur-of-the-moment, reactionary decisions, Flickr'ing Librarians! What I sincerely hope will not happen is the libraries and associations that have started using Flickr will abandon the site because they are scared . . . come on! Don't let this type of e-mail campaign derail you. Look at the big picture of how this site and many others are used and can benefit your online presence. Let's teach our users about the good and bad of online communities, *BUT LET'S NOT just close the door and lock it!*[24]

Thankfully, the kerfuffle died down, and more libraries are using Flickr to share images of their programs, services, and people than ever before. One notable use is the South Carolina State Library's "Day in the Life of SC Libraries" project (see figure 8). Created by Dr. Curtis Rogers at the South Carolina State Library, the contest yields some humorous and touching results. Visit the Flickr site to see the various entries. Rogers was pleased with the results: "All total, I probably spent about 7.5 hours on this and what a great return on the investment of time. It really got people fired up and excited about promoting library services and programs, and excited about using Flickr!"[25]

The information and guidelines for this innovative project are included as appendix 1 at the end of this chapter. This type of program scales well.

Another innovative use of Flickr comes from the Lackman branch of the Johnson County Library in Kansas, which offers a virtual tour (see figure 9).

Moving beyond the library to the entire county, Allen County Public Library created a "Day in Allen County" for its library Flickr presence. Patrons were asked to take photos on a specific day and then send them in. Any size library use this approach too. Possibilities include:

- A Day in _____
- A Day at the Library (or branch or department)
- A Day on Campus
- A Day at the Corporate Library

Flickr for Nashville teens

The teen Web site at Nashville Public Library also displays a Flickr badge via easily inserted code provided by the site. Kyle Cook, reference librarian at NPL, detailed the process for getting images of teen programs to the Web via Flickr in an e-mail interview that included his NPL colleague Jenny Ellis:

> Instead of having all the librarians share one account, we used the networking features in Flickr. Each YA librarian created an account for their branch's teen area. Then, each staff person joined the NPL's Teen Flickr group. The bulk of the work is in setting up the accounts and adding photos.[26]

To see this in action visit the NPL Main Teens' Photos on Flikr.

LIS Students and Wikis

In my intro class, we experimented with posting to Wikipedia instead of writing short papers. A few students had experience with this, but most not. It was intimidating and then exhilarating for them to become wikipedians in just a few weeks—and engage in debate on some of their library-related entries. Then we brought Chicagoan and Wikipedia advisory board member Erin McKean to class. Her day job is to edit the Oxford American Dictionary, but her big question to us was: Are reference works better when produced for money, or for love? The jury is still out—but bottom line, GSLIS students wanted Wikipedia entries to be a more extended focus in future semesters. And every other tool of the Social Web.

Kate Williams, Assistant Professor, Domincan University GSLIS, e-mail interview by the author, April 27, 2007.

Flickr Resources

A Day in Allen County Indiana 2007
http://flickr.com/photos/acplinfo/
sets/72157600028476205

Day in the Life of SC Libraries
www.flickr.com/groups/nlwdayinsc

Lackman Branch Virtual Tour
www.flickr.com/photos/11329886@N00/
sets/72157594291410121

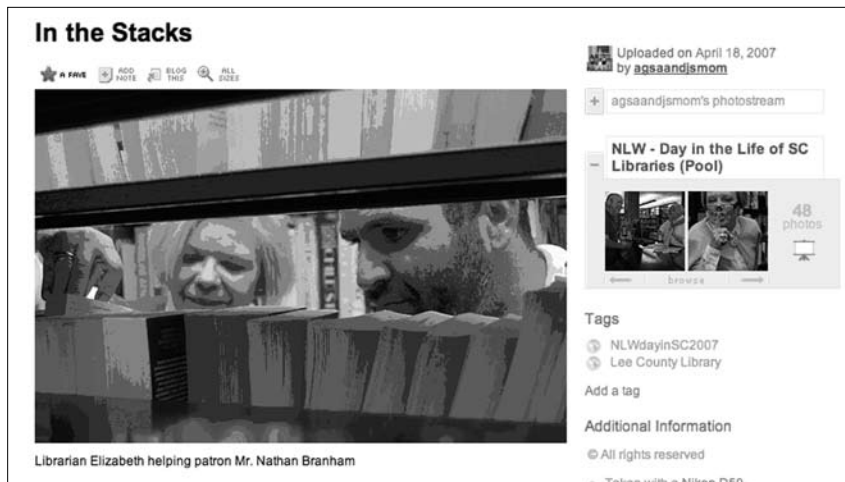*NPL Main Teens' Photos*
www.flickr.com/photos/nplmainteens

Figure 8
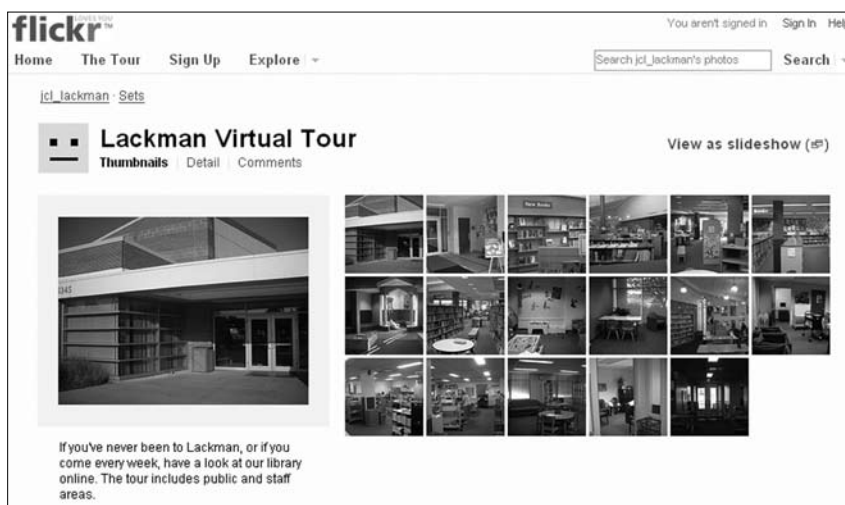Image from "A Day in the Life of South Carolina Libraries"

Figure 9
Lackman Branch virtual tour.

What You Can Do Now

Here are some steps you can take now to begin using the ideas in this chapter:

- If you haven't started a "What's New" blog, it's a great way to dive into creating conversations with a Web 2.0 tools. See last year's issue of *Library Technology Reports* for implementation strategies. Check out WordPress.com for a free, hosted solution, or consider using the open-source WordPress application on your own server.

- Grab an IM screename and try IMing with a colleague. Then, experiment with IM via Meebo. Embed your own IM widget in your personal blog.

- Teach your staff and users how to aggregate RSS feeds via an aggregator. Incorporate this technology into your technology classes.

- Try a wiki site, such as PBwiki, to create a collaborative space for rewriting a library document or creating a report. Experiment with the features.

Ten Best Practices for Flickr & Libraries

1. Edit that profile and make some contacts. Make sure your library's Flickr account profile page includes the URL, mission, contact information, and more. Look for other local organizations or other libraries to make connections as contacts. Invite your patrons to be contacts as well. See the Gwinnett County Public Library's profile for a useful guideline.

2. Tag your images. Make sure you are findable via tags for the library's name, town, university, school etc., as well as through descriptive words for the images themselves. Maybe people searching Flickr for their hometowns will discover images of their local libraries and learn of services or programs they didn't know about.

3. Display images via RSS. Did you know every Flickr account, tag, group, or pool has an RSS feed? Use the feed to display images anywhere on your Web site—each time you update your Flickr images, the feed updates as well. This way, you'll always have new images displaying on your site. See the site's Feedroll to generate the code. Just plug the URL for an RSS feed into the site's form, and it will generate the necessary code to display images (or text). All you have to do is copy that code and paste it into your own HTML page. Once live on the Web, images from the Flickr RSS feed will appear on your page; they'll magically update every time the original site adds new content.

4. Create sets of your programs, events, and specialties. Use the Set feature to organize and present your programs, events, gaming tournaments, and more. Check out the Newport Public Library's Library Programs set for an ongoing chronicle of what's happening. What innovative service or program does your library offer? Flickr it! Tag it and share it with others.

5. Host images for your blog or Web site. Flickr provides the HTML code to easily insert images into a blog post or onto your library's home page. Follow the link on one of your image pages to Different Sizes and choose the size you want. The code is either static or dynamic, meaning the picture can be a static image on your site or it can link to Flickr for commenting, tagging, and more. This is a no-muss, nofuss way to get pictures online; it avoids messy FTP or having to send all Web site pics through one person.

6. Use notes for HTML links and more. Using the Add Note feature, you can easily insert a link to your Web site, blog, or catalog. In fact, some of your colleagues have experimented with posting pictures of new books and linking them to the catalog, thus enabling the "virtual browsing" of new hook shelves. The code is simple HTML.

7. Engage users with those images. Inserting that dynamic, linked code as well as hyperlinked notes can pull folks to your Flickr pages and allow them to comment or interact. Illinois' Westmont Public Library uses this feature as a mini online book club.

8. Share the library's history. See the site for Colorado College's Tutt Library for an example of librarians sharing historic photos of their places and spaces through the years. Some folks may want to comment and share their own memories. Blog the historical photo set and point the way.

9. Use some Flickr Toys to make some snazzy graphics. Have you seen the librarian trading cards? READ posters? Magazine covers? Movie posters? All of these are created at FD's Flickr Toys. Think of the innovative promotional items (like below!) you could create with a badge maker, poster creator, and more. Use them online, or print them for even more excitement. Why not offer a class for teens or kids that includes getting their own magazine covers? Start by training your librarians to make their own trading cards.

10. Allow Flickr access on library computers. Finally, make sure you can access Flickr inside your library. I've received e-mails from librarians who lament that their public computers block access to Flickr. What about folks who may want to upload their images while on vacation?

From Rachel Singer Gordon and Michael Stephens, "Priceless Images: Getting Started with Flikr," Tech Tips for Every Librarian, *Computers in Libraries,* November/December 2006.

Notes

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13. Kern, e-mail interview.

14. Ibid.

15. Help page, Meebo.com, http://blog.meebo.com/help (accessed July 11, 2007).

16. Askacpl Wiki, http://askacpl.pbwiki.com (accessed July 24, 2007).

17. Matthew Bejune, "Harnessing the Hive: Social Networks and Libraries" (presentation, American Library Association's annual conference, Washington, DC, June 21–27, 2007).

18. Ibid.

19. Matthew Bejune, e-mail interview by the author, July 9, 2007.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid

22. Main page, SCRLD Wiki Project, www.scrldwiki.org/index.php/Main_Page (accessed July 11, 2007).

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24. Michael Stephens, "Flikr + Libraries = Scary, Scary, Scary to Some Folks," ALA TechSource, July 28, 2006, www.techsource.ala.org/blog/2006/07/flickr-libraries-scary-scary-scary-to-some-folks.html (accessed July 11, 2007).

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Appendix 1
A Day in the Life of SC Libraries: Information and Guidelines

National Library Week 2007
A Day in the Life of SC Libraries
Photo Contest
Information and Guidelines

south carolina **STATE LIBRARY**

WHAT:

During National Library Week 2007 on the days of April 16-18, South Carolina Library Staff members will take a wide range of photographs of librarians working, meeting, teaching, and doing all that librarians do in a given day. We encourage you to be creative in taking photos that capture the essence of South Carolina librarianship and are visually attractive. Winners will be recognized on the SC State Library's web site and during the 2007 SCLA Annual Conference in the fall in Columbia.

WHEN:

April 16-18, 2007. We suggest that you capture images at all times during these three days. Photos must be submitted via Flickr.com and tagged with NLWdayinSC2007. *There is no need to pre-register to participate in the project. See guidelines below for more submission details.*

WHERE:

Wherever you work! Wherever SC Librarians are!

Suggested photographic subjects:

- At the circulation desk
- Working in technical services
- Drinking coffee at a staff meeting
- Assisting a patron in the stacks
- Shelving books
- Teaching a Library 2.0 class
- Try to capture images from your workplace at different times of the day.

Photos may be submitted in the following categories with one winner chosen from each category and one overall winner honored:

1. Librarians as Teachers and Trainers
2. Librarians as Trailblazers in New Technology
3. Most Humorous

WHO:

The contest is open to all SC Libraries of all types. Professional photographic skills are NOT required.

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HOW:

Use whatever photographic equipment you have available-from digital cameras to 35mm as long as you can post them to flickr.com. We welcome color and black and white images. Details for submitting the photographs are provided below.

CONTEST GUIDELINES

1) **Only SC Library staff (from any type of library) may submit entries for the contest.**

2) **Entries must be submitted on April 16, 17, or 18, 2007.** Entries must be submitted to the NLWdayinSC Flickr group by simply posting them. You must first have a flickr.com account, and then join the group, http://www.flickr.com/groups/nlwdayinsc/. Each photo should also have the tag **NLWdayinSC2007**. You may use any additional tags and titles and descriptions that relate to the photo.

3) **Each individual may submit up to three photos to the Flickr group.** The three entries *do not* have to be spread among the three categories.

4) **All individuals pictured in submitted photographs must sign a photo release.** You may download a copy of the form at http://www.statelibrary.sc.gov/docs/national_library_week.pdf. Entries will not be valid until all signed photo releases are received by fax (803-734-8676) and must be submitted by 5pm April 18, 2007. Please be sure to identify the photo as best you can on the release so the release can be matched with the posted photo.

5) **Winners from the photographic contest will be announced on Friday April 20, 2007 on the Flickr group page and via the SC State Library web site.** Judging criteria will be based on composition, quality, subject, lighting, creativity, and the ability to capture of the spirit of SC librarianship. A total of four photos will be selected winners: One in each category and one overall. These 4 photos will be posted on the SC State Library web site and will be announced in a press release. Winners will also be recognized at the annual fall SCLA conference in Columbia, October 31-November 2, 2007.

CONTEST CONTACT INFORMATION
Dr. Curtis R. Rogers, Director
Division of Statewide Library Services
SC State Library   crogers@statelibrary.sc.gov   803-734-8928   AIM: curtisrogrs

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