

A Guide to Using Web 2.0 in Libraries



Introduction

The Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC) and the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland (CILIPS) support the adoption of new technologies that could enhance the delivery of library services. SLIC and CILIPS have been working with Web2.0 services for over two years now. We believe that the incorporation of services, such as Flickr, Twitter and SlideShare, has enhanced our communication model, enabling us to better support and promote libraries.

Although Web2.0 services have been integrated within our organisation, feedback from our members within the Scottish library and information community indicates that considerable barriers to widespread adoption remain. The greatest challenge seems to be access, as many organisations restrict or block the use of Web2.0 or social networking sites, denying staff the opportunity to experiment with these potentially powerful tools.

In response to demand from members, and in order to address this challenge, SLIC and CILIPS have created these guidelines to highlight the potential of social media within library services and to encourage organisations to reassess restrictive practices regarding access.

A further challenge lies in ensuring adequate training and support for library staff. Technology advances at such a high speed that it can be difficult to keep pace with developments. We hope that this guide, and the associated *Slainte2.0* website (<http://www.slainte.org.uk/slainte2/index.html>), will provide librarians with the necessary information and support required to approach new technologies with confidence. The website will be developed to become a source of up to the minute information on developments within Scottish library services, as well as a showcase for examples of good practice and innovation.

What is Web2.0?

The term Web2.0 refers to the development of online services that encourage collaboration, communication and information sharing. It represents a shift from the passive experience of static “read only” web pages to the participatory experience of dynamic and interactive web pages. In other words, Web2.0 reflects changes in how we use the web rather than describing any technical or structural change.

Service type	Example
Social networking	Facebook, Bebo
Video and photo sharing	YouTube, Flickr
Blogging	Blogger, Wordpress
Microblogging	Twitter, Tumblr
Social bookmarking	del.icio.us, Digg
Wikis	Peanut Butter, TikiWiki
Resource organising	Pageflakes, Netvibes

Many Web2.0 services, such as the examples provided, are often referred to as “social media” due to their role in supporting communication and building online communities.

Why use Web2.0?

Web2.0 services are increasingly becoming embedded in many areas of life as more people, from teenagers to national governments, recognise and harness these powerful communication tools. Similarly, libraries and librarians all over the world are using Web2.0 technologies to promote services, share information, engage with users and network with colleagues, on a global scale.

As such, SLIC and CILIPS believe that social media websites have great potential to enhance the delivery of library services and to contribute to the professional development of library staff. As service users increasingly come to expect interactive online services in all spheres of life, libraries must keep pace with developments elsewhere in order to ensure a responsive service for the future.

Benefits of Web2.0

Reaching your audience

The global nature of web based services means that libraries can reach a vast audience, serving more people in the virtual sphere than would be possible at a physical location. For example, by establishing a presence on social media websites, libraries can reach beyond the 'walled garden' to interact with users in online spaces that they are already visiting, rather than passively waiting for users to seek us out.

This presents opportunities to appeal to difficult to reach user groups, such as teenagers or young males, who are traditionally less likely to visit the physical library building.

A strong web presence, including representation on social media sites, improves awareness of library services and contributes to a progressive and modern image, which may in turn lead to increased physical visits.

Developing services

Static webpages are useful for presenting information about your service but don't allow for the interaction of users. The integration of Web2.0 services, however, could enable you to deliver parts of your service online.

You could try hosting book discussion groups using a blog or wiki and providing service updates or marketing events using Twitter. Some libraries have produced promotional videos for YouTube, which are inexpensive to make and could appeal to difficult to reach groups. For more ideas and examples, see the [Slainte2.0](#) website.

"Web2.0 is just the latest fad."

"Edinburgh has embraced Web 2.0 as a cheap and very effective way of engaging with citizens that has never been possible before. For me, Web 2.0 is much more than a passing phase; it's a whole new mindset, a total culture rethink and it presents new ways of working. Getting started can be scary but it is essential that we, as trusted information professionals, "get" the potential of Web 2.0 if we are to harness our communities' collective intelligence.

"Using Web 2.0 to engage is not just commendable, it is necessary. The population is becoming increasingly tech savvy; they want information at their fingertips and expect local services to be online. But they also still want the personal touch. Web 2.0 offers feedback and comment opportunities that allow them to feel engaged with us."

Liz McGettigan

**Libraries and Information Services Manager
The City of Edinburgh Council**

Raising awareness and promotion

Web2.0 services can be updated quickly and published instantly. This means that time delays associated with traditional web publishing, where IT departments often retain control over website content, can be sidestepped. For example, by using blogs or microblogs, librarians can go straight to the user with news and up to date information related to new services, materials or service developments.

A presence on social media websites can provide cost effective marketing opportunities and invaluable PR for your library service. This is particularly significant given the serendipitous nature of such services, which increases the chance of your message reaching a new audience.

Professional development

Librarians have been using the internet to communicate, share ideas and offer support for a long time, mainly by using the email network. The advent of Web2.0 technologies presents new opportunities for large scale professional collaboration and cooperation.

Many librarians now use Twitter, for example, to get information about activities and initiatives going on elsewhere; and to share ideas or ask colleagues for support. This rapidly expanding network draws on the experience of colleagues at an international level, allowing for the widespread sharing of information and expertise, which then feeds into service developments at a local level.

SLIC and CILIPS believe that participation in this online community can significantly improve staff development, skills and motivation, leading to direct benefit for library services.

“Social networking is just for teenagers.”

Although younger people may have a different perspective on social media, it is not true to say that they are its only, or even predominant, users.

According to information provided by Facebook, for example, the fastest growing demographic is those aged 35 and older (as at April 2009). This shows that social networking is increasingly being embraced by a broader section of society.

Implementing Web2.0 Services

With all the services out there, one of the biggest challenges can be in deciding where to start. Added to this, there are a number of providers offering the same, or very similar, services so it can be confusing to make a choice between different providers. We would suggest the following preliminary approach:

- Determine the most popular Web2.0 services, in general terms
- Liaise with other library authorities to identify the services that have been adopted and the associated pros and cons
- Ask yourself: what do you want to achieve, who would you like to target, which user group will be most interested in the information you are sharing?
- Experiment with Web2.0 services to find out what works best for your service.

A huge benefit of Web2.0 services is that they are designed for broad appeal and are, therefore, very easy to use, even to those with little or no technical expertise. If you do find yourself struggling, our [Slainte2.0](#) website includes a number of sources you can look to for help.

“ICT staff just won’t unblock these sites!”

“Like most others, West Dunbartonshire Council blocks anything that falls within the ‘Social Networking’ category on the corporate firewall (with the exception of public access PCs in libraries). After an initial informal request to unblock this category was declined, I wrote & presented a full business case to an ICT manager who immediately recognised the need for us to access and make use of social networking sites and other Web 2.0 tools. Within two days, I was given full unfiltered access to the social networking category.

“It’s important when writing such a business case to highlight what the tools are, how they are being used elsewhere, what your local business need is, and what strategy you have for implementation. Offer assurances about the responsible use of the sites in question, and never presume that a professional working in ICT will understand how social networking tools work, or how they’re relevant to public sector community engagement.”

Richard Aird

Senior Officer ICT and Learning, West Dunbartonshire Libraries

Staffing Implications of Web2.0

Aside from making provisions in terms of workload, concerns about the legitimacy of staff accessing social networking sites during the working day are often raised by management. In some cases, such concerns result in staff access being entirely blocked.

Similar concerns were raised when email was introduced to the work place but the perception of email quickly shifted and it has become an established communication method. It is likely that social media will follow a similar trajectory and it has already become embedded within many professional or organisational contexts.

As the full potential of social media becomes widely established, employers and employees will develop new strategies to accommodate changes, whether formally (through acceptable use policies) or informally (through trends in practice).

“Staff will be social networking when they should be working.”

“Organisations need to move away from the perception of online social networks as time-wasting personal pursuits and come to appreciate their value as worthwhile professional tools, which can contribute to organisational objectives as well as personal development. SLIC has been using these tools for some time now to communicate with our members and the wider profession. I believe that the organisation has benefited from this and that staff time has been well spent on this type of work. Employers should trust professional staff to approach work in the virtual sphere exactly as they would be expected to in the physical workplace.”

Elaine Fulton, SLIC Director

Legal Implications of Web2.0

In using any third party service, it is important that you familiarise yourself with the provider's terms and conditions and that you understand the implications of use within the context of your own service. An effective way of managing legal risks may be to amend or expand your Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) to cover Web2.0 services. JISC Legal has created a comprehensive guide titled *Web 2.0 and the Law for Information Services* which covers legal concerns in more detail and is freely available online at: http://www.jisclegal.ac.uk/pdfs/Web2_Information_Services.pdf.

Integrating Web2.0

A potentially challenging aspect of working with Web2.0 lies in drawing together the different output from different services - from the text of blog posts and tweets to the videos and images on YouTube and Flickr.

Although it is worthwhile maintaining an individual presence on these sites, you may find it beneficial to have a central place to host this content, bringing all of the individual strands together.

The most natural place for this content is probably your institutional website or webpages, since this is the focus of your library's web presence. This creates an integrated approach, with a single entry point to all of the services that you use, and also helps to identify this external content as part of your range of digital services.

Most Web2.0 services offer options to embed content, either to bring the information into your website or to link up to other Web2.0 sites, for example, to integrate your Flickr photos or tweets within your blog.

Alternatively, aggregator services such as Netvibes and Pageflakes (also known as start-up pages) can be used collate your Web2.0 output and bring the different elements together.

The [Slainte2.0](#) website shows some case studies demonstrating the different approaches to integrating content being used at present in Scottish library services.

“Web2.0 services can be costly to implement and demanding on staff time.”

“All of the web 2.0 technologies that we use are just another way of communicating with our existing and, potentially, new users out there. Why restrict yourself when you can use the power of the web?”

“All of the technologies we use are free – the only thing it costs us is staff time. We are lucky that our staff embrace Web 2.0 and I am keen that they try everything and anything; I've never said ‘no’ yet!”

Jo Rowley
Head of Library Services
Queen Margaret University

Web2.0 and Future-proofing

Given the rapid pace of technological change, in today's information environment it is important to develop services that are adaptable and forward-looking. Although it is true to say that there are no guarantees that specific Web2.0 services will be around in the future, it is clear that they mark a perceptible change in how the web is used. It is therefore important that library services adapt to these services in order to keep up with users' demands and expectations.

“Users don't want to interact with the library on Web2.0 sites.”

“Web 2.0 tools have allowed for increased participation amongst our staff and students. I like the way that Web2.0 has opened up many doors to the library for our staff & students. I think it's important that everyone involved in delivering library services realises the importance of Web2.0 and makes the most of this opportunity to communicate and co-operate with the rest of the world.”

Hugh Beattie
Librarian
Clydebank College

If libraries do not keep up with emerging technologies, continuously striving to provide responsive services, it will become increasingly difficult to catch up. Thus, libraries could be at risk of providing out-of-date and irrelevant services that appeal to a decreasing user group.

Web2.0 and Internal Systems

Some organisations may choose to develop customised collaboration and communication tools. For example, in schools, the Scottish education intranet, Glow, combines some of the functions that may be associated with Web2.0 services but in a closed network designed to be safer for young people.

Similarly, in the NHS the *Knowledge for Care* (Scotland) virtual workspace has been developed to meet the specific needs of that sector, where information is highly specialised and a closed environment has the benefit of offering a single log-in and overcoming access barriers associated with external websites.

In such situations, the librarian's business needs would be best met within the digital landscape favoured by the wider sector. However, Web2.0 services still have much to offer in terms of professional development and collaboration.

**For practical guidance and support please
see our online guidelines:**

<http://www.slainte.org.uk/slainte2/index.htm>

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