Learning (2.0) to be a Social Library

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"The new Web is a very different thing. It is a tool for bringing together the small contributions of millions of people and making them matter."
— From Time, "Person of the Year: You," by Lev Grossman, Dec. 25, 2006

This quote from *Time* magazine introduced a recent OCLC report *(*2007*)*. The *Time* article continues: "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" (Grossman, 2006, p. 38). We do indeed have a revolution in progress and we see it every day in our libraries.   Cruise through your computer labs and you'll see a significant percentage of students on Web 2.0 sites like Facebook, MySpace, and YouTube.

We know that many students live their lives immersed in Web 2.0 technologies. We realize that knowing more about Web 2.0 would help us reinvent and restructure our library instruction to make it fresher and more stimulating. We might find ways to offer other library services in new and interesting ways. We could answer questions at our service desks more easily. If nothing else, we would have a greater understanding of the impact on student lives of this thing that Henry Jenkins calls the "Participatory Culture" (Jenkins, 2006). The problem is that so many of us don't have a clue about Web 2.0.

What Do You Do When You're 1.0 Living in a 2.0 World?

This is the question we faced recently at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga Lupton Library. We realized that most of our librarians and staff were unfamiliar with Web 2.0. Some had little experience even with 1.0 applications.

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One of our staff supervisors brought the "23 Things" program to our attention (Blowers, 2006). This program, conducted by Helene Blowers, the Director of Public Service Technology at Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County in North Carolina, was "a discovery learning program designed to encourage staff to explore new technologies and reward them for doing 23 Things."   The "23 Things" are small exercises on the Web to "explore and expand your knowledge of the Internet and Web 2.0" (Blowers, 2006, para. 1).

Starting with PLCMC's Learning 2.0 Program as a model, we set up a 10-week self-directed program to provide an easy transition to Web 2.0 technologies for our very definitely 1.0 folks. As Dean Theresa Liedtka stated (personal communication, April 8, 2008):

> Our goal was to create a familiarity and comfort level with new technologies commonly used by students among all library staff members. In particular we wanted staff members to get hands-on experience and to become conversant in the language of 2.0 to properly answer and refer questions.

What We Did

In October 2007, we formed the Learning 2.0 Task Force which consisted of eight library faculty and staff, drawn from all areas of the library. We had to make some key decisions to get Learning 2.0 off the ground:

- Web 2.0 applications to target

- Platform for hosting

- Schedule and length of program

- Communication strategies

- How to provide help

- How to verify completion

- Continuing education credits

- Activities and prizes

- Assessment

WEB 2.0 APPLICATIONS TO TARGET

We chose the following Web 2.0 applications for Learning 2.0:

Type of Application	Application Name(s)
Social networking	MySpace Facebook
Social bookmarking	MySpace Facebook
Google applications	Gmail
Blogging and microblogging	Wordpress blogs Twitter
Online photo sharing	Flickr
Online audio/video sharing	Youtube Podcasts
Online music	iTunes iPod Touch

We chose these applications knowing that there are many more that we'll want to address in the future. We chose to highlight the iPod Touch because our library has 30 iPod Touches that will be circulated to students soon, and we wanted faculty and staff to be familiar with their operation.

PLATFORM FOR HOSTING THE TRAINING EXERCISES

Rather than use web pages as was done at PLCMC, we decided to host our Learning 2.0 program on UTC's course management system, Blackboard Academic Suite™. Using Blackboard:

- gave all library faculty and staff some experience using Blackboard which will help them answer common student questions

- allowed us to create and post the modules of our learning program very quickly (vs. creating a website or some other mechanism)

- allowed us to organize all our committee documents (minutes, etc.) in Blackboard

SCHEDULE & LENGTH OF THE LEARNING 2.0 PROGRAM

We grouped the 12 Web 2.0 applications into a total of seven modules; the first module was dedicated to Blackboard. We scheduled our Learning 2.0 program to span 10 weeks with each module designed as a weeklong activity. The extra three weeks were added to accommodate spring break, vacations, peak work periods, etc.

Module 1	Module 5
Blackboard training and exercises	Flickr
Module 2	**Module 6**
Google Gmail Facebook MySpace	iTunes iPod Touch
Module 3	**Module 7**
Blogging	Podcasts
Module 4	
Del.icio.us LibraryThing Twitter YouTube	

CREATING THE LEARNING 2.0 MODULES

The members of the Learning 2.0 Task Force each designed one or more modules with input from the entire task force. Those same task force members would also track module completion once Learning 2.0 was underway. We followed these guidelines:

- All instructions posted in Blackboard

- Tasks are relatively simple and illustrate basic features of the Web 2.0 technology

- No formal training provided, but modules contain links to help resources

- Each module includes a "Help" discussion thread on the Discussion Board

- Everything must be available without charge on the Web

- Tasks created with built-in markers to help us track accomplishments

VERIFYING MODULE COMPLETION

To build in these checkpoints, we created key tasks that were easily trackable. For example, in the blogging module, people were asked to view a short video called *Blogs*

in Plain English (Lefever, 2007). They were asked to create a personal blog and to add a post with their comments about the video. They were instructed to post a link to their blog in the Discussion Board. The module monitor could easily check the links to each person's blog and verify that the individual had watched the video and created their own blog. Another example: the MySpace and Facebook module included a requirement to "friend" the module monitor.

We created a tracking spreadsheet in Google Docs. It's a simple spreadsheet with each person's name and a place to check off each task as it is completed. Using Google Docs allows us to have simultaneous users and access from anywhere.

Communication Strategies

On her PLCMC Learning 2.0 website, Blowers suggested only using 1.0 technologies to communicate with participants (Blowers, 2006). We took this advice to heart. We communicated frequently throughout the 10 weeks using face-to-face meetings, e-mail with encouragement and reminders, weekly announcements in Blackboard, and even paper notices in mailboxes.

To kick off the program, we held an all-staff meeting. We introduced the Learning 2.0 concept and described the importance of ongoing self-education.   The Learning 2.0 Task Force members each took a few minutes to demonstrate or describe something fun or interesting you could do with the skills learned in their modules.

Providing Help

We did a number of things to help the Learning 2.0 process along.   We recognized that much of what people needed to do was just play around with websites and equipment. To facilitate this creative playing, we set up a technology room with PCs, Macs, and iPod Touches. We also made a digital camera available for 24-hour checkout. In addition, our technology room includes a digital camcorder, digital audio recorder, and a PC and iMac loaded with audio and video editing software. This "technology petting zoo" (thanks to Courtney Stephens of Belmont University for this phrase) was open at all times to library staff and faculty. Although the Learning 2.0 program is completely self-directed, we recognized that people would still need help. We developed a series of scheduled times during the 10 weeks where our IT folks would be available to answer questions. (This was extremely popular!)

We also provided Help threads in the Discussion Boards for each module where people could post a question or an answer. Module monitors made sure that everyone got an answer in a reasonable time.

Incentives – Food, Prizes and Continuing Education Credits

Continuing Education Credits

At the University of Tennessee, all staff members are required to get at least 32 hours of continuing education credits each year. Our task force determined credit hours by asking two people to test each module and record how much time was required. Using these 2 sets of data, we decided how much each module would be "worth". One of the benefits of this method was that we were test driving the module with a new user. We were able to identify sources of confusion and correct flaws before the program was launched to the entire library.

Prizes

Prizes are very motivating and are definitely part of the fun! We set up the following prize structure:

- Grand prize is an MP3 player with video screen. Everyone who finished Learning 2.0 by April 18th was entered for the drawing.

- 2nd and 3rd prizes are Amazon.com gift cards. Names are drawn from all those who finished Learning 2.0 by April 18th.

- Special prize awarded for the most creative playlist name in the iTunes module.

- Special drawing for Amazon.com gift card. Name drawn from the names of all those who chose to complete an optional evaluation form.

All of the prizes will be awarded at our grand finale – the Ice Cream Social.

Treats draw a crowd

We provided snacks and sweet treats at the kick-off meeting and several times throughout the Learning 2.0 weeks. Sometimes these treat days were scheduled to coincide with one of our "help" days in the technology room. Sometimes treats showed up in mailboxes with a note from the "Snack Fairy" with encouragement or reminders about the week's module.
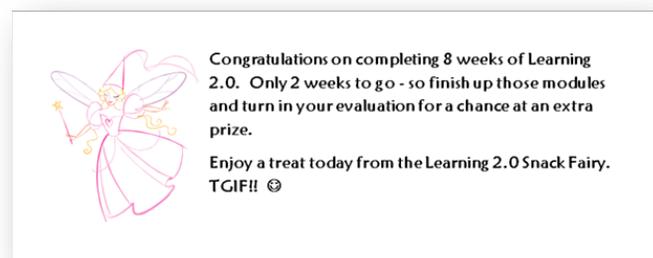
Congratulations on completing 8 weeks of Learning 2.0. Only 2 weeks to go - so finish up those modules and turn in your evaluation for a chance at an extra prize.

Enjoy a treat today from the Learning 2.0 Snack Fairy. TGIF!! ☺

Figure 1: Example of notice put in mailboxes during Learning 2.0

Our Learning 2.0 Grand Finale will combine an Ice Cream Social, a celebration of accomplishments with awards for the cleverest blog or the best iTunes playlist name, plus all the prize drawings.

BUDGET

Our 10 week Learning 2.0 program for 30 people totaled under $300 in direct costs. With that money we provided food and beverages at the kick-off meeting, snacks and treats on 4 occasions, beverages and ice cream sundaes at our final celebration, a grand prize of an MP3 player, and 3 Amazon.com gift cards as additional prizes.

ASSESSMENT

At the end of the 10 week program, each participant was asked to complete an online survey which asked them to:

- Rate each Web 2.0 application for usefulness

- Rate each Web 2.0 application for ease of use

- Give suggestions for improvements

- Suggest other Web 2.0 applications to study

- Suggest other topics for future library-wide training programs

REACTIONS AND RESULTS

Judging by the comments on the assessment surveys, the overall reaction to the Learning 2.0 program was positive. Some common themes emerged from these comments:

- Many found the program "engaging", "interesting", and a "positive experience."

- Many stated the need for more time.

- The self-directed aspect of the program engendered quite a number of comments. There were several requests for more and better instructions. Quite a number of people requested that we actually do training classes for future Learning 2.0 ventures.

- Many people were uncomfortable with the idea of their personal information on a MySpace or Facebook page.

- All but 2 of the 12 applications were ranked by the majority of respondents as "Very easy" or "Somewhat easy" to learn and use. The iPod Touch got the most votes for being "Somewhat difficult."

- The majority of people found MySpace, Facebook and Twitter only "Somewhat useful". A majority found Gmail, blogs, YouTube, LibraryThing, Del.icio.us, Flickr, iPod Touch, and iTunes to be "Very useful."

(More survey results in Appendix A)

LESSONS LEARNED/THINGS WE'LL DO NEXT TIME

1. Put instructions in ONE place only! We put complete instructions for the modules on Blackboard. We also gave everyone a paper "checklist" with the key checkpoints for each module so they would have a handy way to keep track of what they had finished. Unfortunately, many people used the paper checklist almost exclusively, which was incomplete and thus very confusing for them.

2. Give people a way to check whether they have completed a module. The task force members used a Google Docs spreadsheet to track completions, but this wasn't available to everyone. One of the improvements suggested in our assessment survey was to use the grade module in Blackboard so people can see their own progress.

3. Provide more assistance. Many people truly needed more help. We got many requests (on the surveys) for some kind of organized classroom training for each module, for more detailed instructions, and for more help to be available in our technology room.

4. Promote the social aspects of the Web 2.0 technologies by asking people to read and comment on each other's work (blogs, photos, Twitter, MySpace, Facebook, etc.) Explore various aspects of social bookmarking and tagging in technologies like LibraryThing, Flickr, and Del.icio.us.

5. Allow more time or schedule fewer activities. Nearly a third of participants had difficulty completing the seven modules in 10 weeks.

6. Conduct pre- and post-module skills/experience assessments. In hindsight, we wish we had conducted pre- and post-Learning 2.0 skills assessments. We plan to add this to our next round.

PUTTING WEB 2.0 TECHNOLOGIES TO WORK FOR THE LIBRARY

Students have a lot vying for their attention and it's all pretty entertaining (e.g., YouTube videos, text messages from friends, comments on MySpace and Facebook). It can be hard for library instruction and library services to compete in this media-rich environment. At UTC, we are already using a number of Web 2.0 technologies and are considering ways to expand our Web 2.0 footprint. Some examples:

- We are producing podcasts that help students with basic skills such as the difference between scholarly and popular literature, finding a book, or using a popular database. We will be making those and other podcasts available on 30 circulating iPod Touches. We envision creating podcasts to refresh and restructure our Freshman Orientation sessions.

- UTC is developing ways to use Second Life as a platform for distance education or scenario-based training.

- Library instructors use Del.icio.us as an easy way to provide web resources to students.

- UTC Lupton Library is expanding our use of blogs to disseminate notices, collect departmental information, provide Reference Desk information, and collect planning documents for the proposed new library.

- "LibraryThing for Libraries" can be used to add tag-based browsing, book recommendations, ratings, and reviews to an OPAC. We are considering using LibraryThing to display new books or featured books on our library website (see http://www.librarything.com/about).

Conclusion

Learning 2.0 at Lupton Library was interesting and rewarding, and we are using our new Web 2.0 skills to update library instruction and library services. I'll conclude with a quote from Dean Liedtka: "I think Learning 2.0 has been an unequivocal success!...I hope we can maintain the momentum created by this experience and perhaps expand our learning objectives in this area in the future" (personal communication, April 8, 2008).

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Appendix A

Results from Learning 2.0 Surveys

Page: The Survey Monkey wants to know what you thought about Learning 2.0!

1. Please rate each of these Web 2.0 technologies by how useful you found them:

	Very useful	Useful	Neither useful nor not-useful	Somewhat useful	Not useful	Rating Average	Response Count
Gmail	31.3% (5)	18.8% (3)	25.0% (4)	12.5% (2)	12.5% (2)	2.56	16
MySpace	6.3% (1)	12.5% (2)	12.5% (2)	43.8% (7)	25.0% (4)	3.69	16
Facebook	18.8% (3)	31.3% (5)	0.0% (0)	37.5% (6)	12.5% (2)	2.94	16
Blogs	43.8% (7)	31.3% (5)	6.3% (1)	6.3% (1)	12.5% (2)	2.13	16
YouTube	31.3% (5)	25.0% (4)	18.8% (3)	12.5% (2)	12.5% (2)	2.50	16
Twitter	28.6% (4)	7.1% (1)	0.0% (0)	35.7% (5)	28.6% (4)	3.29	14
LibraryThing	31.3% (5)	25.0% (4)	18.8% (3)	18.8% (3)	6.3% (1)	2.44	16
Del.icio.us	46.2% (6)	23.1% (3)	7.7% (1)	0.0% (0)	23.1% (3)	2.31	13
Flickr	50.0% (8)	31.3% (5)	6.3% (1)	12.5% (2)	0.0% (0)	1.81	16
iPod Touch	43.8% (7)	37.5% (6)	0.0% (0)	6.3% (1)	12.5% (2)	2.06	16
iTunes	56.3% (9)	25.0% (4)	12.5% (2)	0.0% (0)	6.3% (1)	1.75	16
Podcasts	31.3% (5)	43.8% (7)	12.5% (2)	6.3% (1)	6.3% (1)	2.13	16
					Your comments: view		7
					answered question		16
					skipped question		0

2. Please rank the ease or difficulty of learning/using the following Web 2.0 technologies:

	Very easy	Somewhat easy	Neither easy nor difficult	Somewhat difficult	Very difficult	Rating Average	Response Count
Gmail	56.3% (9)	43.8% (7)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.44	16
MySpace	31.3% (5)	31.3% (5)	18.8% (3)	18.8% (3)	0.0% (0)	2.25	16
Facebook	37.5% (6)	43.8% (7)	12.5% (2)	6.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	1.88	16
Blogs	31.3% (5)	37.5% (6)	12.5% (2)	12.5% (2)	6.3% (1)	2.25	16
YouTube	57.1% (8)	35.7% (5)	0.0% (0)	7.1% (1)	0.0% (0)	1.57	14
Twitter	50.0% (7)	21.4% (3)	7.1% (1)	14.3% (2)	7.1% (1)	2.07	14
LibraryThing	35.7% (5)	57.1% (8)	7.1% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.71	14
Del.icio.us	42.9% (6)	42.9% (6)	0.0% (0)	7.1% (1)	7.1% (1)	1.93	14
Flickr	18.8% (3)	31.3% (5)	25.0% (4)	25.0% (4)	0.0% (0)	2.56	16
iPod Touch	25.0% (4)	25.0% (4)	12.5% (2)	37.5% (6)	0.0% (0)	2.63	16
iTunes	31.3% (5)	31.3% (5)	18.8% (3)	18.8% (3)	0.0% (0)	2.25	16
Podcasts	18.8% (3)	31.3% (5)	31.3% (5)	18.8% (3)	0.0% (0)	2.50	16
					Your comments: view		6
					answered question		16
					skipped question		0

3. What Web 2.0 technologies do you think we should explore in the next round of Learning 2.0? Choose as many as you like, and add your own suggestions not on the list.		Response Percent	Response Count
RSS & newsreaders		62.5%	10
SecondLife		56.3%	9
LastFM/Pandora		12.5%	2
Wikis/Wikipedia		50.0%	8
Technorati		31.3%	5
Browser applications (such as Google Documents)		68.8%	11
Google Labs		25.0%	4
43 Things		25.0%	4
Meebo		37.5%	6
Digg		12.5%	2
Skype		31.3%	5
Remember the Milk		12.5%	2
Slideshare		31.3%	5
Google Earth		31.3%	5
Sketchup		6.3%	1
Photoshop Express		43.8%	7
I'm not sure - surprise me!		37.5%	6

COMMENTS ABOUT THE OVERALL PROGRAM:

"I thought it was great fun and afforded me some great opportunities to build social relationships with folks outside my department…I found it engaging and challenging."

Need "more instruction on how-to"

"I've definitely become of a fan of 2.0 and I've also enjoyed getting to know my colleagues better through social networking."

"It was difficult time wise."

"Some of it I found interesting and will use, others I will never go back for myself again – only if I had to help a patron."

 "Overall I thought this was a positive experience. Not too demanding from a time issue, and easy to fit individual modules into a work schedule. I would have preferred there to be a larger variety of categories to choose from so that you could choose say 10 of 15. That way those of us already

versed in a category would be able to choose something unfamiliar to work on."

"Overall it was interesting, to say the least."

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS:

"…another activity for each module should be to comment on others' work. For instance, post to a co-worker's blog or comment on someone's pictures"

"It would be nice if the person responsible for a weekly module could have a classroom reserved for that week for those of us who could attend at that time to do the module as a class."

"Maybe have beginners and advanced modules. I would like to learn about these technologies in greater depth."

"Would it be possible to have actual classes for subsequent modules? I think for some individuals, myself included, having an instructor walk us through the exercises as well

as provide one on one assistance makes a huge difference in boosting mastery of the applications. Classes would also make it easier for supervisors to allot specific periods of time for the assignments."

"I would prefer that the training occur during the summer." (There were several comments to this effect.)

"Provide more detailed instructions." (There were several comments about a desire for more or better instructions.)

"allow more time"

"Maybe have people (including students) share how they use these technologies in everyday life. Could give some context to the program."

COMMENTS ABOUT SPECIFIC APPLICATIONS:

I rated Facebook and My Space based on usefulness to me however I recognize for students these two resources are like air and food.

"I find the whole idea of my personal information being "out there" more than a little creepy."

"I don't really care for MySpace – too intrusive. I am also trying to ignore my daughter's comments that it is 'icky' and desperate that I have this account."

"I think it is helpful to have a passing familiarity with student's online social networking habits."

"this is really cool, possible addictive" (LibraryThing)

"It's just a very nice way to bring all my favorite music together without having to purchase a whole CD." (iTunes)

"Great little gadget. I may very well have to get one." (iPod Touch)

"I'm really thinking seriously that I might need an iPod." (iPod Touch)

"I enjoyed Flickr and will be using it a lot." (Quite a few people really enjoyed Flickr and indicated that they intend to continue using it.)