

Web 2.0 - What's going on?

Judy O'Connell is the John H Lee Memorial Award Recipient for 2007. Judy won this prestigious award for her innovative work she has done within the Parramatta Diocese in bringing teaching and executive teams together with students in gainfully using the power of Web 2.0. Her following article examines the power of Web 2.0.

The Internet was once mostly about surfing from one static Web site to another while collecting or viewing data along the way. But now users share information, collaborate on content and converse worldwide via social-software tools. Actually, over the last few years, our relationship with the Web has been changing dramatically! Simple new technologies like blogs, wikis, podcasts, flickr, del.icio.ous, podcasts and more, are allowing us to not only create content like audio, text and video more easily, they are also allowing us to publish and share that content on the Web with very little effort.

We're entering the age of the Read/Write Web, and this Web 2.0 world is one in which contributing knowledge is as easy as consuming it. Learners are co-learners and co-authors in this type of environment making it possible for learners to collaborate and generate new knowledge or build expert domains by a community of practice.

We have many options to participate and publish and these technologies are often described as social software. So our learning and teaching is shifting to absorb social software tools for creating collaborative knowledge spaces, where learners can access people and knowledge in ways that encourage creative and reflective learning practices that extend beyond the boundaries of the school, and beyond the limits of formal education.

Web 2.0 provides the opportunity to shake off old models of technology use and capitalise on new opportunities for creativity and innovation in an online world. Web 2.0 is giving our learners, our teachers and our libraries options never before possible.

The social web: learning together

Knowing our students is no easy task in the early years of the 21st century. Whether it is blogs or wikis or RSS, all roads now point to a Web where little is done in isolation and all things are collaborative and social in nature.

The *Youtube* and *Myspace* generation is leading the way in creating new forms of social networking and community-based learning. School and home life are no longer compartmentalised and so our approach to learning needs to adopt the same flexibility and online permanence for lifelong learning.

Two prominent collaborative tools being used in education are **wiki** and **blogs**. Weblogs (blogs) are a very popular Web 2.0 tool and are used in education as a way of sharing or managing information and promoting literacy and learning. **Blogs** can be used to communicate, showcase student work, collaborate, demonstrate analysis and synthesis and promote as well as develop peer involvement. They allow students to publish their work, present ideas, record events, promote podcasts (their own audio or media files), offer commentary, share images, experience fieldtrips and more. Blogs have proven to be a highly effective medium for fostering a professional learning community and a personal learning environment.

Wikis are also popular and a useful way of sharing and creating knowledge, or managing a project. Wiki software allows students to easily upload content to the internet, with the important addition that it is then editable by other readers. The best know wiki of all, *wikipedia*, is an online encyclopaedia which shows the power of collaborative action.

Wiki, more than anything, can promote collaboration and group work and are an ideal way for Teacher Librarians to organise and present information resources for students. Students can easily create and use a wiki for topic areas, projects or assessments, or to share experiences. Our teachers have recognised the importance of good wiki and are looking for opportunities to get wiki-kids into action!

RSS – coming, ready or not!

Imagine having the latest headlines and updates from your favourite websites or blogs delivered to your desktop. RSS is an acronym for *Really Simple Syndication*, an XML formatting language which allows users to subscribe to sites that offer ‘feeds’ of new content. You can use a ‘feed reader’ to see any new content from a range of web pages or subscriptions.

So an *RSS Reader* acts as an *aggregator*. RSS services allow distribution of information and can be used effectively to disseminate newsletters, podcasts, or information alerts. RSS lets the student or teacher control what content they need in their personal learning space. Parents too can join in the blog community, and keep up-to-date with the ‘doing and thinking’ of the learning spaces of their child.

RSS has also made it possible to podcast (broadcast) audio to wider and more specialised interest groups. Podcasts are available for download to personal computers or mp3 players for entertainment or information. Students are beginning to produce podcasts to share their work and display their knowledge and enthusiasm to their peers. Students love to have their say and podcasting allows them to do this in digital style.

Fast forward – facts and flicks

Social bookmarking allows learners and teachers to share their Internet bookmarks or favourites to a public website rather than searching bookmarks stored on a personal computer. Users have the option of adding tags (keywords) to help define the information and improve the organisation and sharing of the information. While different social bookmarking sites encourage different uses, social bookmarking opens the door to new ways of organising information and categorising resources. Teachers and teacher librarians at many schools are branching into these new ways of working online 24/7, using Del.icio.us, preparing and sharing their knowledge with transparent ease.

And of course, pictures or images are a vital part of our visual world. Learners have easy access to a pool of images in Flickr, or have a place to store images for their projects, school excursions, or school events. Not to be outdone, teachers also share video snaps through TeacherTube or other media sharing sites.

What does this all mean?

Today we are witnessing the demand for new ways of learning and teaching in school and outside school driven by the emergence of new forms of Web 2.0 read/write

technologies. We need to ask ourselves whether what we teach and how we teach is a sound basis for engaging our digitally native students.

The learning agenda in today's world is totally new, totally engaging, totally global and totally personal. The story of this wave of innovation known as Web 2.0 is still developing. What is certain is that nothing will ever be the same in the learning landscape of our schools – and that teacher librarians are embarking on a significant journey of challenge and change together, affirming the importance of our work and the value of shared inspiration.

Judy's Sites

[Heyjude](#)

[Bibliosphere News](#)

[What is Web 2.0?](#)

Resources

Richardson, W. (2006). *Blogs, wikis and podcasts and other powerful web tools for classrooms*. California, Corwin Press.

[Weblogg-ed: Learning with the Read/Write Webb](#)

[The Ultimate RSS Toolbox: 120+ RSS Resources](#)

[Teaching Hacks Wiki](#)

[Teacher Librarian Wiki](#)

[Classroom Blogging Wiki](#)

[Using Web 2.0 Principles to become Librarian 2.0](#)

[Web 2.0 and Libraries: Best Practices for Social Software](#)

[Web 2.0 for the Classroom Teacher](#)