



2.0 Watch

DISPATCHES FROM THE FRONT LINES OF WEB 2.0

2.0: Are We Done Yet?



Tired of the whole “2.0” thing yet? Yes, well, I sort of am too. In fact, if you keep up with the 2.0 naysayers out there, you might be tempted to believe that 2.0 is passé and that we should be focusing our attention on 3.0 (whatever that might be) or perhaps on the rebirth and resurgence of the “expert.” Oh yes, the “expert”... something we library folk should certainly be happy about. Except, I can’t use the word “expert” without quotation marks around it, and that should tell you something.

While you might be as fatigued over the labels and memes around the world of 2.0 as I am, here’s the thing: I don’t think

we’re done with it yet. In fact, I don’t think that the library world has even scratched the surface of what it means to be 2.0 yet. So, let’s start there, shall we?

How Did We Get Here?

The web 2.0 movement hit the library world a couple of years ago, and deliberations over labels aside, most of us came to think of web 2.0 (and perhaps library 2.0) as the explosion of blogs, wikis, and other social media on the web and in libraries’ online spaces. Except, web 2.0 was (and is) so much more than that. When you boil it right down, web 2.0 is the result of two trends:

1. The proliferation of user-generated content
2. Harvesting data through the development and use of application programming interfaces (APIs)

So, yes, the blogs and wikis of web 2.0 fit nicely into the user-generated content trend, but what about that second one? Without the ability to tap into data through the use of APIs, we wouldn’t have half the wild and wonderful 2.0 applications we use today. Without APIs, we couldn’t do all the brilliant things we’re doing with Flickr, Google Maps, Amazon, YouTube, Yahoo... and the list goes on.

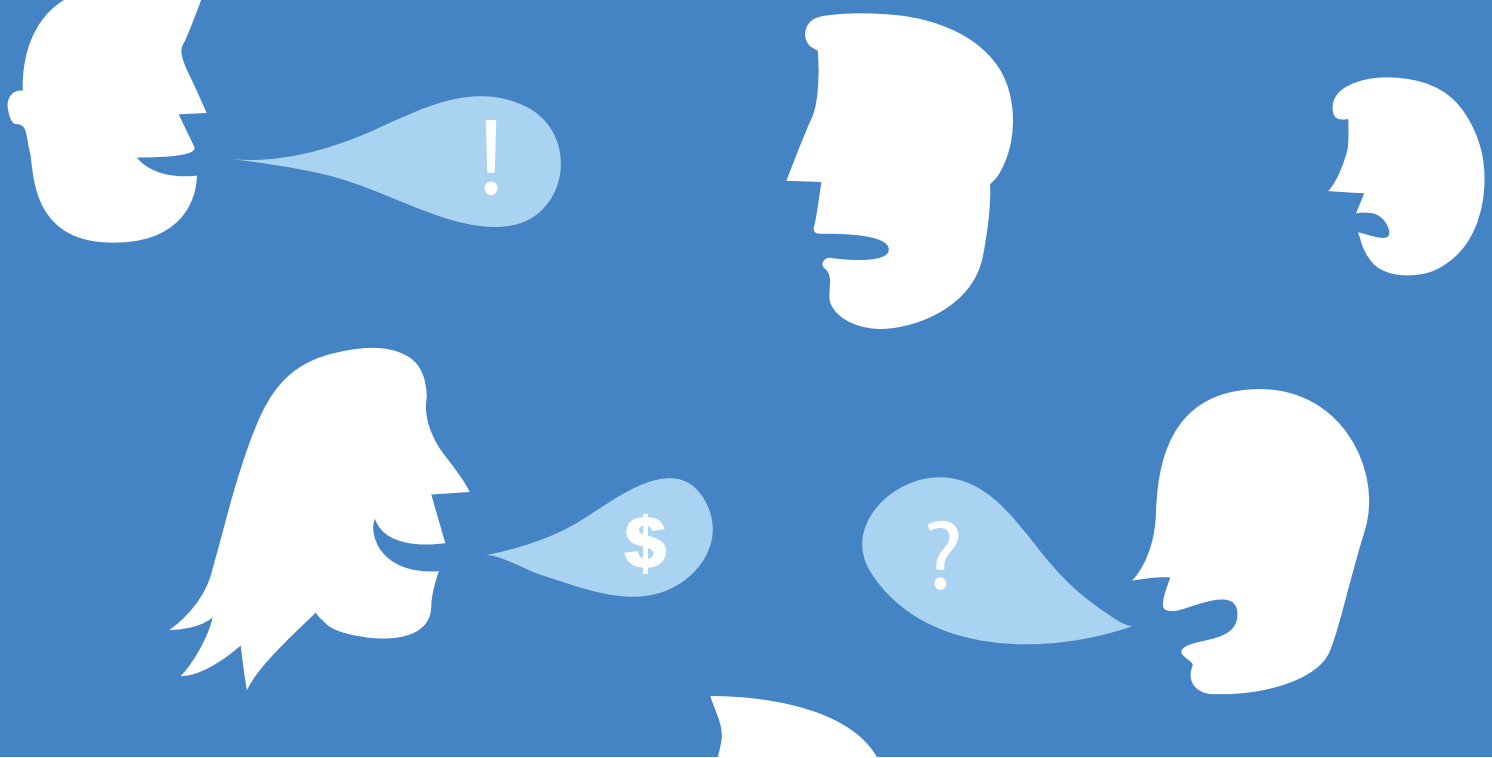
But, wait! What about those blogs and wikis? Read on.

The Technologies of 2.0

The trends led to the technologies, and you can’t attend a library conference without hearing about these technologies: blogs, wikis, social bookmarking tools, online social networks, social media sites. Notice how many times the word “social” popped up in that list? It’s no coincidence.

By Amanda Etches-Johnson





You'd be hard-pressed to find a 2.0 tool that *doesn't* revolve around user-generated content and being social around that content. Which means that a blog is just *barely* a blog without a commenting feature to allow authors to interact with their readers. And a wiki that has a lone author misses the point of the format altogether. And a social bookmarking site that is only used to collect links is good, but using those links to find other people with the same interests as you is the *really* good part.

The technologies of web 2.0 are not only about providing a platform for users to contribute their unique voices and perspectives to the web; they're also about affording end-users the ability to get social with each other around that content, whether that content is text, a link, an image, a video clip, or just about anything else you generate in digital format.

Watching the 2.0 Library


I started this column by saying that I think libraries still have a long way to go in scratching the surface of 2.0. After that discussion of 2.0 technologies, you might find yourself wondering what else there is that we're missing. Yes, we've done a good job of not letting the technology pass us by, but what about the *philosophies* of web 2.0? Surely you've heard of them: radical trust,

transparency, and localization, just to name a few. Without radical trust and transparency, are we really engaging in honest conversations with our users online? Are we "radically trusting" our users by opening up our online spaces to accommodate their content? Are we really making the most of APIs and open data to customize content for our local communities?

The short answer is ... *not yet*. The longer answer is what this column is all about. In each issue, this column will feature an interesting library application of a 2.0 tool, technology, or

(dare I say it?) philosophy. My goal is to highlight some of the ways in which libraries are harnessing the power of 2.0, as well as to shine a light on how much farther we can go. It should be a fun ride, and I'm looking forward to it. I hope you are too.

Amanda Etches-Johnson is the User Experience Librarian at McMaster University. She is also an adjunct faculty member at the Faculty of Information and Media Studies, UWO. Both of her jobs are pretty 2.0 focused, and that makes her happy. You can find her online at blogwithoutalibrary.net.



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