

# Library 2.0: taking it to the street

Lynette Lewis  
Coordinator Online Services  
Yarra Plenty Regional Library Service  
[ljlewis@ypri.vic.gov.au](mailto:ljlewis@ypri.vic.gov.au)  
[www.ypri.vic.gov.au](http://www.ypri.vic.gov.au)

**Abstract:**

*In October 2006, Yarra Plenty Library participated in the online learning program Learning 2.0, designed to introduce participants to the world of Web 2.0. Our journey since the instigation of this program has led us to new ways of delivering services to our community. This paper will outline the concept behind the Learning 2.0 Program, look at the Library Worker 2.0 follow-up training modules and the applications in which staff now use Web 2.0 technologies to provide new interactive services and programs for our community. It also outlines how we have shared our experiences with the wider library community.*

## Library 2.0 – what’s it all about?

The concept of the humble library has certainly changed! Let us step back to reflect on a few changes in libraries in the last few years: we have gone from a building that housed a physical collection to a fully networked Library Management System with web based catalogue, and we have introduced web services such as web sites, e-Books, e-Journals and databases into our services that allow library patrons to use our collections without entering the library, all with 24/7 access. We have become quite powerful in what and how we provide these services to the community, but if we are to remain relevant we must continue to change to enable us to better meet our community needs. Why? Because our community is constantly changing. Library 2.0 has recently become a buzzword in the library world, but what does this concept really mean to us as library professionals?

Michael Casey described his concept of Library 2.0 as:

*“The heart of Library 2.0 is user-centred change. It is a model for library service that encourages constant and purposeful change, inviting user participation in the creation of both the physical and the virtual services they want, supported by consistently evaluating services. It also attempts to reach new users and better serve current ones through improved customer-driven offerings.”* (Casey and Savastinuk, 2006)

Helene Blowers elaborated on this theory more recently in a presentation at the State library of Victoria which she called “Library 2.0: transforming the Library through the web” (Blowers, 2007). She described the importance of Library 2.0 in the library in the following ways:

- It’s about cultivating communities
- It’s about encouraging participation
- It’s about human conversations
- It’s about collaboration
- It’s about being in their space
- It’s about small pieces loosely joined
- It’s about shifting the focus
- It’s about letting go

The media is currently filled with information about Web 2.0, but what does this concept mean? Tim O’Reilly (O’Reilly, 2005) describes Web 2.0 in the following way:

*“...refers to a perceived or proposed second generation of Web-based services—such as social networking sites, wikis, communication tools, and folksonomies—that emphasize online collaboration and sharing among users.”*

People and organisations are now using Web 2.0 applications every day, and many of them access these programs in the library, on public computers. For staff to be able to assist with such simple things as loading a Flickr image or opening a podcast, they must know what these applications are, and have a basic

understanding of how they work. Likewise, before we can implement any Web 2.0 applications into the library environment for the public to use with any thought of success; we must, once again, equip our staff with a basic understanding of the technology, and, more importantly, with the enthusiasm to help develop and actively promote these services to the community.

At Yarra Plenty Library, like many public libraries, we are continuously implementing changes to enable us to reach our community better. Our strategic plan, which is a rolling four-year plan, charts the direction in which we would like our organisation to ultimately head. The strategic plan incorporates four frameworks, which have been labelled as Library 2.0 activities:

- Finding information,
- Enabling learning,
- Creating content and
- Celebrating culture.

Within these four frameworks, we have listed the types of new technologies and Web 2.0 resources we need to achieve our goals, and to deliver services into the future. New technologies, such as downloadable MP3 files, a more interactive web presence through blogs and wikis, federated searching, and integrated tagging from LibraryThing in our library catalogue, just to mention a few, are part of the Yarra Plenty Regional Library Service vision for the future.

Trends in the way libraries reach their communities are not only relevant to the virtual space; changes may also need to happen in the physical space too. At Yarra Plenty are also looking at the services we provide within the library and ways we can utilise space better for the community within our physical buildings. We have made major changes at one branch in the way we provide our reference services. Our reference desk has been replaced and the reference librarian equipped with a small, fully portable tablet loaded with the Library Management System and the Internet. This allows reference staff to rove library via a wireless connection.

Implementing RFID and self-service loans throughout all our libraries is another major change affecting the physical space of our libraries. Our aim is to have all our libraries completely 100% self-service loans. This means a different way of working for circulation staff, who will no longer be behind the circulation desk, but out alongside the patrons. It will also free them from repetitive circulation tasks to undertake more outreach activities with the community in the library.

To highlight some of the technological changes we were implementing at Yarra Plenty, and how they were structured into our overall library's strategic plan for the future, we set out to the library branches with a road show, with the aim of informing and enthusing staff. The road shows included demonstrations of blogs, wikis, iPods and podcasting, MP3 files, Google tools, federated search tools, and of the vision of how such tools fit into our existing service.

Any type of technological changes in the library environment must be supported with training and learning opportunities for staff. In a public library environment where there are numerous branches and a mixture of full-time, part-time and casual staff,

training and professional development opportunities become a major challenge. The response to our road shows was overwhelmingly positive, and staff wanted to learn more about what these Web 2.0 technologies were and how we could use them in the library. They wanted training.

## The Library 2.0 program

Fortunately for us, Helene Blowers from the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County (PLCMC) had already developed an online program called "Learning 2.0: 23 Things" for PLCMC staff. (Blowers, 2006) This program was about half way through when we heard about it and was attracting a lot of positive publicity. Until now, Yarra Plenty had only used conventional classroom methods to train staff, but this program sounded like a great way to engage as many staff as possible with some of the new Web 2.0 technologies.

The PLCMC Learning 2.0 program is an online self-discovery program developed by Helene Blowers based on "*43 Things You (or I) Might Want to Do This Year*," an article written by Stephen Abram. (Abram, 2006). Blogging is one of the predominant activities of the Learning 2.0 program. The program is set out on a learning blog with links to 23 individual exercises. Participants are also required to record thoughts about each discovery exercise through their own blog, which they must develop as part of the program (activity 3). Each exercise involves listening to a podcast, some discovery resources to look at on the web and a choice of discovery exercises to complete. Many activities also included extra resources to explore if the participant wanted. The program introduces participants to the following Web 2.0 applications:

- Blogging
- Photos and images
- RSS and newsreaders
- Image generators
- Tagging and folksonomies
- Wikis
- Online applications
- Podcasts, videos and downloadable audio files

The main message of the program is not to train people in specific applications, but to encourage exploration through self-learning.

Stephen Abram, from SirsiDynix, launched the Yarra Plenty Learning 2.0 program at Yarra Plenty in October 2006. Stephen is the Vice President of Innovation, and one of the Library Journal's "Movers & Shakers top 50 people who are shaping the future of libraries and librarianship." At the launch, Stephen enthused staff with his presentation on the use of social networking tools. He also spoke about the ways library staff could facilitate the creation of content in the library.

We used the PLCMC program, but developed our own Online Learning blog to use as an introduction to the Learning 2.0 program. Our Yarra Plenty blog provided the links to the Learning 2.0 program, and also enabled us to offer week-by-week encouragement to our staff, as well as extra links and resources, and to advise

people of any changes we thought appropriate for our learning environment. Similar to PLCMC; we set up a Yarra Plenty Participants Blog and linked each participant's blog to this. We allowed blogs to be anonymous, and this created quite a lot of comments, with participants trying to work out which blog belonged to which staff member. Without even realising it our staff had begun to engage in some social networking skills.

Progress was monitored via RSS feeds to each participant's blog, and a staff tracking log that recorded the progress of each participant was set up on an MS Excel spreadsheet and uploaded to our Intranet, so progress could be viewed. Each time a staff member completed an activity, they were awarded a star beside their name on the spreadsheet. Each star on the spreadsheet represented a new thing each person had learned. During the 12-week program we achieved 1400 stars, equalling how many learning units our organisation has grown by. The program ran for twelve weeks, which allowed an extra three weeks to cover annual leave over the Christmas holidays. The voluntary program was open to all staff, regardless of their position in the library. Out of the initial 136 participants who joined our program, 50 completed it by the set date.

The following comments from two participants' blogs are examples of personal achievements:

*"Web 2.0 is a whole world I hardly new existed and I now see the purpose for having "space" and sharing it. Most of what I saw was shared by people a lot younger than me, but I can see how we should be creating a much more interactive website for our own library."*

and

*"Not only have I learnt about the web etc etc I have also learnt about myself- I AM tenacious, I AM capable of learning new tricks, I AM still able to be surprised & thrilled to discover new things ... What we all need to do is to keep learning, searching & investigating. Open our minds, switch on our pcs & join the world waiting out there. Now that this chapter is over & the real journey is just beginning I aim to go back to the beginning and refine & define all I have learnt"*

The Learning 2.0 program has had a great impact on staff, who now know they are capable of learning new technologies, and that it is OK to learn through exploring and playing with web applications, rather than having to wait for more formal structured training to be scheduled. It has brought the staff to a new skill level and a willingness to learn and adapt to technological change. Their knowledge of Web 2.0 applications has also meant our staff are now more willing to contribute new ideas about how to use these Web 2.0 tools to reach the community. Staff have since demonstrated their competence using some of these Web 2.0 tools by developing blogs for our library service, offering training to the public in Web 2.0 applications and developing various wikis for staff and the public to contribute to. We have introduced more advanced training opportunities for staff wishing to continue their learning journey.

## Library Worker 2.0

As a result of the Learning 2.0 program, and its success, our Library 2.0 journey continues with a training plan called Library Worker 2.0. Library Worker 2.0 is based around four frameworks, listed earlier in this paper, that are an important part of the Yarra Plenty strategic plan for where our library would like to head in the future.

The Library Worker 2.0 training program is divided into five main areas of interest:

- Finding information,
- Enabling learning,
- Creating content,
- Celebrating culture and
- Leading the organisation

These more specialised modules examine using Web 2.0 technologies in specific areas of the library and how to best use these resources to reach our community. Each module comprises three workshops and an active learning project for the year. Like the Learning 2.0 program, it is voluntary and open to all levels of staff.

The Finding Information module is designed to explore traditional and cutting edge information and reference services and resources. It includes: an in-depth look at how federated searching works, getting the most out of our Library Management System and searching various sources of online information. By the end of the program, participants should be confident in providing reference services including online, roving and mobile services.

The Creating Content module is for staff interested in Web 2.0 technologies and how we can create and use them to engage the community in social networking. By the end of the program the participants will have expertise in creating blogs, wikis and other tools and the skills and confidence to engage in social networking.

Enabling Learning is for staff who want to provide training sessions for the public. By the end of the learning module, participants will have the skills and confidence to prepare and present classes in the library, they will know how to prepare a lesson plan and will be confident in engaging with different age groups. Workshops will cover Train the Trainer, and a choice from various areas, including: wikis and blogs, engaging teenagers, power searching, and babies and preschoolers.

Celebrating Culture is about the physical look of the library and promoting our collection, as well as learning how to run events and helping people find a good book to read. Staff who complete this module will have the confidence and skills to run events at the library, a broad working knowledge of popular contemporary and classic authors and a good understanding of reader's advisory tools.

Leading the Organisation is for staff that are interested in being a leader in our organisation, regardless of their level, finding out more about themselves and understanding others better and helping others achieve their potential. By the end of this module, participants will have a greater understanding of themselves and others, and the skills and confidence to mentor and coach others.

## **Web 2.0 applications in the library**

The Learning 2.0 program has enabled staff to see ways that Web 2.0 applications can be used in the library. The Library 2.0 program has extended this learning so staff could use their skills to share their knowledge with the community. Web 2.0 applications are now incorporated into the library environment, whether it be in a virtual or a physical space, in many ways.

### **Blogs**

Yarra Plenty Library now hosts four library blogs for the public in the following areas; Yarra Plenty blog, which is a blog edited by the CEO and used to advertise new products and technologies in the library, and to invite public comments on new policies and library implementations. A local history blog, a genealogy blog and a book blog have also been established by interested staff, and all of these invite public comments. Staff members who have participated in the Library 2.0 program and have seen an area where this technology could be useful in the library have developed all these blogs. Our community can now comment on activities, events, books that are reviewed and local history and genealogy activities.

### **Wikis**

Our first wiki was a Summer Reading Club wiki that was developed so our younger members of the community who join our summer reading club during Christmas could contribute book reviews. With the help of staff, many book reviews were posted onto the wiki. Additional information about Summer Reading Club library activities and photos of their activities helped to make this a useful addition to our community. We are now in the process of building a community wiki. This project has been developed in consultation with some organisations in our community including local historical societies, book groups and local councils. Our vision is that it will encourage people in our community to contribute their knowledge in such areas as local history and local literature. The wiki has been built, and now we need to work with the community to create the content. A Readers advisory wiki is also being developed with a vision that members of the community will be able to share their favourite book reviews. It will also include links to book lists and incorporate LibraryThing social software, to enable the added functionality of readers being able to see similar authors and genres to books they are reading.

### **LibraryThing**

LibraryThing is social networking software that allows the individual to catalogue and tag his or her own personal book collections. There is also a free product designed for libraries called "LibraryThing for Libraries". At Yarra Plenty, we have integrated LibraryThing's social data into our public online catalogue using their specially designed software. Incorporating this product has enabled our borrowers to have an extra functionality of being able to see "who writes like who" and similar genres when searching for their favourite fiction title. This functionality is not available through our Library management System, but by incorporating the LibraryThing open source

software into the program; we enable our community better access to resources.

## **Web 2.0 classes**

Yarra Plenty Library has offered classes in using the PC, Internet and email skills since the 1990s. We have now extended our small group training to include the Web 2.0 technologies. We have already conducted classes in blogging, podcasting and iPods, eBay, LibraryThing and Second Life.

The Library Worker 2.0 training has helped develop our staff's skills so they are confident to write and conduct classes on Web 2.0 applications, while the Learning 2.0 program has provided the background knowledge and enthusiasm for them to share their learning experiences with the public.

## **Web 2.0 presences**

At Yarra Plenty, we also have web presences on Flickr and YouTube. As mentioned before it is all about taking the library to the community. YouTube and Flickr have enabled us to showcase our libraries to the world, by sharing events and activities with the online community. More importantly, it has allowed us to be part of two huge virtual communities. Our online presence in these communities has enabled Yarra Plenty to be showcased to other libraries across the world. Feedback and emails from libraries in other parts of the world who have seen us on these webpages confirm that libraries are using these sites to search for other libraries activities

## **Unconference**

The success of our Learning 2.0 program enthused us to share these experiences in new ways with our library colleagues. There is a continual wealth of ideas and knowledge being posted on blogs and via journal articles, and we wanted to see who else in our library community was implementing Web 2.0 technology, and the ways they were using it to reach their communities. We decided to do this by hosting an Unconference in March 2007. The aim of the Unconference was to provide participants with a learning experience and the opportunity to network, share knowledge, brainstorm and explore areas of interest around the theme of Library 2.0. The day was facilitated, but focused on who was at the event and what they were interested in. The content of the sessions was created and driven by the participants. There were no formally planned sessions or MS PowerPoint presentations. Interactive tutorials and discussions guided by experts in the field made up the day. The organisers provided space and enough blank surfaces to write on so that people could self-organise around a general theme. Everything else was up to the participants. Representatives from school, academic, special, public and the State Library of Victoria were all in attendance.

The first item was to set the agenda for the day. With paper spread across the floor and markers in hand, attendees put thoughts to paper, expressing ideas about what they wanted to discuss for the day. Ideas were then arranged into a workable agenda:

- Web 2.0 = library 2.0?
- Wikis
- RFID in libraries
- Literary blogging
- Information literacy : overcoming fear
- OPACs and mashups
- Library education
- Young people social networking
- Virtual services /sharing resources
- Second life
- Re-engineering reference, IM and virtual reference
- Library 2.0 : 23 things program
- Tagging reader recommendations : creative tools
- Convincing stakeholders of our worth

There were some great conversations, exchanging of ideas, thoughts provoked, inspiration given, new connections made through networking, and so much more. Information leading up to the Unconference was posted on a blog, as was information about each session held. This allowed participants to comment, raise questions and participate in this event, whether they were in attendance or monitoring activity virtually. The blog also enabled us to informally evaluate the usefulness of the Unconference, by inviting feedback, which included the following comments:

*“I learnt more about how to practically do some Web 2.0 things in my library and also found out what is happening in other libraries across sectors and across the State.”*

*“Web 2.0 became “real” for me that day. The unconference gave me the opportunity to see first-hand ways which Web 2.0 can be used for promoting our library service and upskilling staff. It was also good to be part of the energy and vitality coming from this gathering.”*

## **Partnerships**

Library 2.0 is all about social networking and community. Since we have completed the Learning 2.0 Program, we have been able to share our knowledge and experiences with other library communities, just as Helene Blowers did with us when she developed the program.

## **East Gippsland Building Online Communities Project**

The East Gippsland Building Online Communities Project is an example of using free Web 2.0 applications to assist people reach out to their respective communities.

*“This project aims to link the East Gippsland Shire Library, Community College East Gippsland (BACE Inc.), Neighbourhood Houses and Community Centres across East Gippsland to enhance the capacity of remote East Gippsland residents to*

*effectively and purposefully access e-learning opportunities and online library services.” (East Gippsland Shire Council, 2007)*

We have assisted this program by running introductory interactive workshops for their participants, many of whom are physically isolated by distance from their centres, and many of whom are volunteers.

## **ATO Learning 2.0 - 23 Things Program**

Special Libraries with a more specialised client base than the public library are no exception to the Learning 2.0 program; and Yarra Plenty assisted in the administration of this program to ATO libraries across Australia. By using open source software made available through Google Tools to administer the Learning 2.0 – 23 things program and to track participant’s progress, we were able to share files without having to be part of any specific network. The ability to comment via blogs also assisted communication.

## **State Library of Victoria**

More recently, specific departments within the State Library of Victoria have begun the program, enabling staff to build on their knowledge and skill base as part of the SLV 21 vision. The State Library program is being run in three phases, with the first skilling a core group of people so they can then act as mentors for the next two groups of participants.

## **Victoria Public Libraries Learning 2.0 Program**

Our biggest challenge to date is the administration of the Learning 2.0 program to all the public libraries in Victoria. The project is a Statewide Public Libraries Development Project collaboratively developed by the Victorian Public Library Information Network (Viclink) and the State Library of Victoria. It has a total of forty-five public libraries participating and a massive one thousand participants from libraries across Victoria. This project truly reflects the power of online learning and Web 2.0 applications. The Web 2.0 applications showcased in the Learning 2.0 program can be used anywhere, by anyone, 24/7. There are no accessibility issues such as isolation, library hours or timetables and venue; and the program is suitable for all staff, whether they are full-time, part-time or casual. However the most exciting aspect of this project is the enthusiasm of the participants; it is a fine example of how library communities can collaborate.

## **Wikinorthia Project**

Yarra Plenty is also partnering with Darebin and Moreland Libraries to create a community wiki (Wikinorthia). This project is funded through a Libraries Building Communities grant. Wikinorthia will involve creating a wiki that will enable people from diverse backgrounds in our respective council areas to contribute their current life stories and recollections. It is an exciting project, and it is also a great chance to work with colleagues from other libraries

## Other partnerships

Since the completion of our Learning 2.0 program, Yarra Plenty has been contacted by interested Universities about our experiences in setting up the program for staff; and these universities have now set up their own learning programs for staff. We have also have been contacted by libraries in Lithuania, and have been visited by a staff member from a library in Norway about the program. Learning 2.0 has truly become a world-wide collaborative effort.

## Networking

One cannot forget the power of the media when writing about the experiences of Web 2.0 in the library; after all it was through the media, online of course, that Yarra Plenty first heard of the Learning 2.0 program being run at Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. Like any innovative program that can assist libraries outreach to their communities, Learning 2.0 has enabled us to gain media coverage in journals such as *inCite*, *Australian Library News*, and *Wired*. We have also had the pleasure of being able to share our experiences with our library colleagues at seminars and conferences: Information Online 2007, ALIA National Library and Information Technicians Conference 2007, LibraryConnect and now via this paper at VALA 2008. Our most memorable seminar, however, was the SirsiDynix webinar in February 2007, where we connected to library professionals across the world, via an interactive online program, and spoke about our experiences implementing the Learning 2.0 program. It was the first webinar conducted by SirsiDynix outside North America. Web 2.0 certainly enables communications and interaction that were not possible a few years ago.

## Where to from here?

It is important, as it is with any technology, that the learning continues. To equip us to reach our community we must continually strive to learn, explore and play with technology. Technology has no boundaries; it has no start or finish, just as we were reminded in the Learning 2.0 program that learning is a continuous lifelong journey. Since the completion of the Learning 2.0 program in public libraries around Victoria, many examples of Web 2.0 tools being used in library situations are emerging. Some libraries have set up public blogs to inform their respective communities of library events and to encourage feedback. Blogs have also been set up as a form of communication among committee members on specific committees and working groups. A wiki is under development to be used to share training ideas and information between libraries and database vendors within the Gulliver consortium. More webpages are displaying interactive links to Web 2.0 tools such as LibraryThing, blogs and RSS feeds. Trends in technology and library developments are being written as blog posts as well as published journal articles, so reading the RSS feeds accumulating on a feedreader is becoming part of many staffs' daily professional development regime. It is not just library pages becoming more interactive; subscription databases are now RSS feed enabled so new articles of interest can be tracked. Many database pages can now be manipulated to suit individual library needs and blogs are being used as FAQs and help screens. We,

as users of these tools, are beginning to expect pages to be able to be manipulated to suit our current needs, and as these needs change we expect to be able to alter them. A new generation of Internet user is emerging, one that communicates via a Facebook account, one that shares information via Flickr and YouTube, and uses RSS feeds to keep them updated. This generation of not only expects to find information they need online, but also expects to be able to manipulate that information into something useful for their individual needs. If the library cannot provide information to need their needs, they will simply look somewhere else until they do find it.

In November 2005, a white paper that Ken Chad and Paul Miller wrote called "Do Libraries Matter? The Rise of Library 2.0." put forth some interesting ideas of Library 2.0 and where libraries are heading. (Chad and Miller, 2005)

*"Library 2.0 is a concept of a very different library service that operates according to the expectations of today's library users. In this vision, the library makes information available wherever and whenever the user requires it."*

They detailed the following four principles:

- The library is everywhere.
- The Library has no barriers
- The library invites participation
- The library uses flexible, best-of-breed systems

Chad and Miller sum up their white paper: (Chad and Miller, 2005)

*"Put simply, libraries must now begin to use these Web 2.0 applications if they are to prove themselves to be just as relevant as other information providers, and start to deliver experiences that meet the modern user's expectations."*

The journey ahead is one of continual learning. It is not so much the tools we use, but how we can use them to best reach our community. As Helen Blowers describes it in the Learning 2.0 Program: (Blowers, 2006)

*"It is a life-long journey of exploration through play".*

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