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Bringing You A "Library 2.0" Perspective, by Michael Casey

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Working Towards a Definition of Library 2.0

Looking First at Web 2.0

Yesterday's public release of [Flock](#) has created some reluctant questioning among proponents of Web 2.0, with the best comments coming from [WeBreakStuff](#). For anyone who may not know, Flock is a new browser – actually it's built on Firefox – that integrates your Delicious feeds into the browser itself. Flock also makes blogging a bit easier by integrating a blog editor into the browser.

However, WeBreakStuff is spot on when they say, "[*But being 100% honest, I'm still not sure I'm changing my browser to have a way to integrate delicious and a blogging tool into my browsing experience.*](#)"

When was the last time you changed your browser? I switched to Firefox about twelve months ago and have been with them ever since, leaving IE and Opera behind. However, I have since added many extensions to my Firefox browser, customizing it to a level I find usable and efficient. No matter how good Flock may be, it must be able to not only beat my bionic Firefox but it must offer sufficient rewards over and above what I already have – there must be a compelling reason to change the browser itself.

Products offering incremental improvements in technology -- like Flock-- can no longer ask the user to make such fundamental changes. As much as I hate to say it, Flock's approach is to take Web 2.0 technologies and attempt to push them on the community in a manner reminiscent of Web 1.0.

I would extend this idea of Web 2.0 to any program that requires an installation to the user's local computer so that the program can run as its own operation. Simply put, don't make the user download software – make the application work within the browser itself. As an example, take a look at [Taskable](#), an "*RSS and OPML browser built into the Windows taskbar notification area*". Taskable is a great product that makes accessing RSS feeds simple and quick, but the fact that it is a separate program, always running in the background, keeps it *off* my list of desirables.

So how does this all fit into Library 2.0?

[Michael Stephens](#) recently asked several panelists at [Internet Librarian 2005](#) to describe what a Library 2.0 website would look like. In response he got some very forward thinking replies, my favorite, I think, being [Sarah Houghton's](#). Sarah sees library websites following the same trajectory as commercial ones, in that you can no longer really figure out how large a library is by the look of its website – small libraries are now beginning to create websites that rival and often better the websites of larger library systems. Small libraries are now pushing content via RSS, they are creating methods for users to customize content, and they are creating multiple access points for customer queries such as email, IM, blogs, chat, wikis, etc.

The introduction of these services into public libraries has not been an easy one. Established orders and outdated operating procedures have made the introduction of new thinking difficult – Library 2.0 is not something that will enjoy a seamless or fluid transition period. Moving to Library 2.0 will require a rethinking of many models with which we have grown comfortable. This push will not necessarily come from within. Indeed, most catalysts will be from outside – financial crises, staffing shortages, user expectations/demands, technological changes/barriers, etc. Many library system are already somewhere on this continuum of change, breaking through the old pitfalls that include:

- Identity-crisis
- Role confusions
- Goal-fixation
- Over-attachment to successful methods
- Requiring perfection before release/implementation
- Lack of discernment
- Interminable attempts at consensus

Beyond websites, beyond even the world of technology, the concept of Library 2.0 embraces something not yet discussed here at LibraryCrunch: disruptive ideas. [Richard MacManus at Web 2.0 Explorer](#) is in the middle of an ongoing search for disruptive startups in the world of Web 2.0 – companies that, as he says, either create disruptive technologies (like Google did) or “*non-geek services built using Web 2.0 technologies*”.

Disruptive technologies rock the boat, they create new expectations and new boundaries. Disruptive technologies allow the customers, the user, to see beyond the limits of the old framework. A disruptive technology following the Web 2.0 concept may allow that customer to move beyond the limited role of “user”, and move into the world of designer or moderator – this is where all of those clichéd phrases such as *radical trust*, *user as contributor*, *rich user experiences*, and *user behavior not predetermined* (all of these can be found on [Tim O’Reilly’s Web 2.0 Meme](#)).

So Library 2.0 is a disruptive idea, that is established. Feel free to email me your thoughts: [mecasey \(at\) gmail.com](mailto:mecasey (at) gmail.com). In my next post I hope to further explore this concept of disruptive ideas.

Posted by Michael on October 21, 2005 08:24 AM | [Permalink](#)

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Listed below are links to weblogs that reference [Working Towards a Definition of Library 2.0](#):

» [Taskable and the issue of stand-alone programs](#) from LibraryCrunch

Sean Nolan, author and owner of Taskable, responded to comments I made in a recent post regarding my take on Taskable. I took Taskable to task (sorry!) for being a stand-alone program (instead of something like a Firefox extension). ... [\[Read More\]](#)

Tracked on [October 23, 2005 11:21 PM](#)

» [The Technologist The Librarian His User & Her Console - Library 2.0 inspecting the label](#) from panlibus

Once upon a time a long time ago [in October 2005] the term label Library 2.0 hit the streets. A short while later the much linked white paper Do libraries matter? The rise of Library 2.0 from my colleagues Ken... [\[Read More\]](#)

Tracked on [December 7, 2005 08:17 PM](#)

Comments

Surely a Library 2.0 web site would be largely invisible, because the library's core services wouldn't (only) be on its own web site at all; they'd surface out there on the Web, where actual and potential users spend far more time than they do on the library web site!

Posted by: [Paul Miller](#) | [October 21, 2005 05:05 PM](#)

Michael, some great points here, and I look forward to your next installment --- but I'm a bit confused by your dismissal of "any program that requires an installation to the user's local computer" ... certainly all of the extensions you talk about putting into Firefox required downloads, right? And I don't see that users do or should perceive a difference between functionality that lives within a browser "process" or outside of one --- I would imagine that very few users know what a "process" is!

I absolutely do understand a wariness about separate apps due to all of the bad things that client software can do to your machine ... but that feels like a different concern than the one you're raising.

I hope I don't come off as defensive (as the author of Taskable) --- I'm just confused. I can see where you're coming from with Flock. I don't like anything that forces me to change my environment in order to "fit" with their stuff --- and moving to a new browser is certainly a big shift. Is there more to this point that makes you think of Taskable?

In any case, thanks for the ideas and thoughts; keep them coming!

---S

Posted by: Sean | [October 23, 2005 12:46 AM](#)

Michael,

I notice that you have not provided a definition of Library 1.0. You and I have previously discussed this and how when discussing (debating?) the transition from Library 1.0 to Library 2.0, it is natural for those interested in this concept to first seek a definition of Library 1.0. Personally, I think that defining Library 1.0 would be difficult, and possibly even counterproductive. I'd love to see your comments on that here on LibraryCrunch.

-Laura

Posted by: Laura Savastinuk | [October 23, 2005 11:26 PM](#)

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