

LibraryCrunch

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

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We Need a Web 2.0 Integrator

Pulling it all together – that's going to be a big hurdle in the near future. When libraries begin thinking of integrating Web 2.0 applications we face an issue I rarely see discussed; ease of use. We all agree that there are many Web 2.0 apps and Web 2.0-like services that we want to offer our customers, but what we've failed to discuss is our ability to offer these services to our users in a smooth and highly usable way.

Let's use an example. Let's say my library wants to integrate, on its OPACs, just the following three items:

- Flickr for image sharing and tagging
- Delicious for tagging and bookmarks
- Netvibes for RSS aggregation

How are we going to do that? We can link to these items individually in some prominent way, but our users will need to create accounts and unique screen names for each service. Flickr won't present too much of a problem since users will be able to tag library images and browse other library-user's images. But finding other library user's images may be difficult unless those users systematically identify their images with a common tag.

Further, the library will be unable to craft a method, in Delicious for example, where library bookmarks can live alongside customer-created bookmarks – each user's account will be isolated from every other user's account and the library's account.

The library can create a base OPML file of RSS feeds for Netvibes, but we cannot then update those lists for individual users once those users create their own account and import the OPML file. There is also no way for the library to select the most popular RSS feeds from library user's Netvibes accounts and place them in any central location.

There are obviously other issues related to integrating such services. If we want to offer these wonderful tools then we need an integrator – a tool that will allow our users seamless access across the applications we choose to offer. Until we can address this issue, most libraries will be reluctant to officially offer any of these services and will, instead, choose simply to link to them and never take full advantage of all they have to offer.

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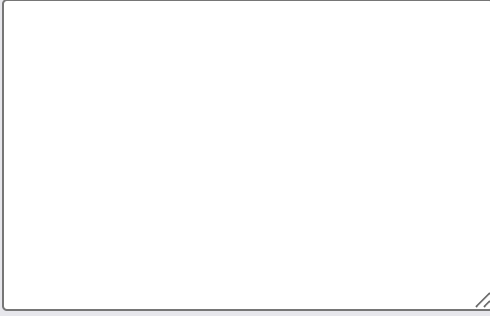
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