

LibraryCrunch

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

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Library 2.0: Two Good Discussions

Two recent postings caught my attention and I'd like to point everyone to them. The first is an interview Michael Stephens did with Michael Golrick [over on ALA's TechSource](#). Golrick is the City Librarian in Bridgeport, CT. The other post is [Paul Miller's at Panlibus](#). I'd like to reprint here something he said:

Personally, I am increasingly of the opinion that we are wasting our time trying to nail down concrete definitions of either Web 2.0 or Library 2.0. Neither is a concrete thing to be narrowly scoped, and the landscape within which both reside is in flux, rendering anything but the most vague definition obsolete soon after it is agreed. We help no one if we conduct flame wars over whether or not some new capability, or some alternative perspective, fits within a definition that was cast in stone far sooner than it should have been.

I think we do understand what Library 2.0 is about (and that it's more than technology!). Of course, some people give more emphasis to some areas than others, and I might personally question the Library 2.0-ness of an X-Box in a library, but consensus does appear to be evolving around participation, openness, the value of the Platform, taking content and services to people rather than expecting people to come to them, and more.

What Michael Golrick and Paul Miller both hit on is the fact that Library 2.0 is **not** tech-centric but does attempt to take full advantage of the Web 2.0 tools only now becoming available. Library 2.0 is a model for library service that reaches out to new users (Long Tail), invites customer participation (participatory service), and relies on constant change (perpetual beta).

Finally, let me say how good it makes me feel to know that administrators like Golrick are thinking about Library 2.0 and the possibilities it has to offer.

Posted by Michael on January 6, 2006 05:30 PM | [Permalink](#)

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I must admit that the notion of 'perpetual beta' as a core characteristic of Library 2.0 continues to worry me.

We must, of course, continue to innovate, and to explore new modes of service delivery or borrower/patron/customer interaction, but 'perpetual beta' - at least to my mind - says more about the Help being incomplete, and some of the features not quite doing what anyone thinks they should than about an innovative and evolutionary approach to delivery of a quality service.

"Excuse me, Mr/Ms/etc Library Director, we'd like you to throw away your robust, stable, understood (and, yes, old fashioned, non interoperable, and monolithic) library system and replace it with this beta we've knocked up for you..."

I can see that conversation going well...

Would a conversation along lines that include 'evolutionary', 'meeting customer requirements', 'value for money', 'interoperable', 'standards compliant', 'component', 'choice', 'platform' not have more chance of success, more often?

Posted by: [Paul Miller](#) | [January 9, 2006 04:39 AM](#)

Thanks for the nice comments, Michael. And thanks also for hearing what I was trying to say.

I also think that Library 2.0 is not "beta only," but new AND old.

Here I will show my age. I remember when Sony came out with Betamax. Libraries agonized of whether to get them. Are they too fragile? Look how much they cost! (Movies were \$90 or more as first releases in the early 1980s.) Then came VHS. Libraries on the edge had to live with both Betamax and VHS for a while, until the dust settled. We will have to do the same again!

Posted by: [Michael Golrick](#) | [January 30, 2006 06:20 PM](#)

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