

LibraryCrunch

Service for the Next Generation Library: A Library 2.0 Perspective by Michael Casey

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Library 2.0 Theory: Web 2.0 and Its Implications for Libraries

Jack Maness has an interesting piece over on [Webology](#) that explores the definition of Library 2.0. He presents a very well-argued thesis that Library 2.0 is primarily a technology-centered theory. While I agree that technology does play a key role in the ability of today's library to move forward and serve more users, I am not convinced that technology can ever be the primary component in this thing we call Library 2.0.

My concern rests with this paragraph where Maness says:

A theory for Library 2.0 could be understood to have these four essential elements:

- **It is user-centered.** *Users participate in the creation of the content and services they view within the library's web-presence, OPAC, etc. The consumption and creation of content is dynamic, and thus the roles of librarian and user are not always clear.*
- **It provides a multi-media experience .** *Both the collections and services of Library 2.0 contain video and audio components. While this is not often cited as a function of Library 2.0, it is here suggested that it should be.*
- **It is socially rich .** *The library's web-presence includes users' presences. There are both synchronous (e.g. IM) and asynchronous (e.g. wikis) ways for users to communicate with one another and with librarians.*
- **It is communally innovative.** *This is perhaps the single most important aspect of Library 2.0. It rests on the foundation of libraries as a community service, but understands that as communities change, libraries must not only change with them, they must allow users to change the library. It seeks to continually change its services, to find new ways to allow communities, not just individuals to seek, find, and utilize information.*

It is his fourth point (*It is communally innovative...*) which I have always argued is the crux of Library 2.0. A philosophy of change in library services is far more than a technology-driven concept. The heart of such change rests on a system of evaluating services and incorporating what our users want, including but not limited to certain new technologies. The first three points are important parts of any library's service offerings but they are little more than evolutionary steps in regard to library technology advances.

Pushing such new technologies to users, either through in-house creation or from vendors, does little to create purposeful change in the library itself. Indeed, without continuous and purposeful change, how is the library to keep up with what its users want with regard to new technology?

Technology is very important, but it is only a tool that will help us build Library 2.0 .

Posted by Michael on August 1, 2006 11:39 PM | [Permalink](#)

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