

LibraryCrunch

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

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Carnival of the Infosciences #54

I'm happy to be hosting the 54th edition of the [Carnival of Infosciences](#) here at LibraryCrunch. It was a busy week for the Carnival and for me. The Carnival received several excellent submissions (which I'll tell you all about in just a minute), but first a bit about what I did. I traveled to Columbia, South Carolina, on Wednesday to hear [Stephen Abram](#), [Jenny Levine](#) and [Michael Stephens](#) speak at the South Carolina Public Library Technology Institute. Now, the folks at the South Carolina State Library know how to put on a good show. Kudos to [Patti Butcher](#), South Carolina's State Librarian, and all of her staff. The room was great, the use of tables instead of a mass of chairs created a wonderful social environment, and the food was very good. Even the music played between the speakers was great! This was the first library conference where I've heard the Rolling Stones and REM! But we were there to learn from the speakers, and we learned a lot.

[Stephen Abram](#), always the energetic and daring speaker, let everyone know up front that we have not had much change in the past fifteen years. Yes, you heard correct. As he went on to explain it, while we have seen change we should look back to the change our parents and grandparents lived through -- cars, electricity, radio, television, refrigeration, an entirely new world economy... you get the picture. Thinking about it this way does help to put things into perspective -- and it helps stop the whining about change. [Jenny Levine](#) illustrated how libraries can use several technologies to reach new audiences. She explored the use of blogs, RSS feeds, aggregators, [Flickr](#), [SuprGlu](#), [Delicious](#), and other free or cheap tools to spread the library's word. [Michael Stephens](#) spoke to Librarian 2.0, which he sees as balancing technolust, building trust and transparency, being a trend spotter, and understanding the value of training. Take a look at Michael's [Library Technology Reports](#) for more helpful information.

Curtis Rogers (who can multitask better than anyone) has some video clips of [Michael Stephens](#), [Jenny Levine](#), [Stephen Abram](#) and the excellent introduction by [SC State Librarian Patti Butcher](#).

[Photos of the day's events can be seen here.](#)

And now, on to the Carnival!

[Helene Blowers](#) (who I saw just last month in Charlotte at her most excellent [Learning 2.0](#) kickoff and again got to see this week in [Columbia](#)) sent the Carnival a note asking us to look at [Leslie Burger's post on the Google Blog](#). Burger, President of the ALA, wrote about banned books as part of the 25th anniversary of Banned Books Week (September 23-30), and she says:

Now Google has joined the party. At google.com/bannedbooks, you can use [Google Book Search](#) to explore some of the best novels of the 20th century which have been challenged or banned. And while libraries and bookstores around the country celebrate the 25th anniversary of Banned Books Week with special readings, displays, and more, you just might end up with a visit to your local library or bookstore and an old favorite or a new banned book in hand.

[Joshua Neff](#) enjoyed Michelle Boule's "[Building a Better Beta](#)" over on ALA's TechSource blog so much that he [wrote his own response](#) on his blog. I agree with Joshua, Michelle's post was excellent and the idea of "[perpetual beta](#)" has [always appealed to me](#). Pushing out beta services does not mean giving our users junk. Perpetual beta means that we consistently revisit these services, seeking to improve them in an effort to reach more users with a better product. Michelle clearly illustrates this when she says:

I am not advocating for libraries to conduct half-formed programs with little thought or planning. Building beta is more about flexibility and allowing the participants—not the creators—to redefine the meaning of the service. Planning beta is about allowing for failure, success, and change.

Joshua follows by saying on his blog:

We know we want to always offer our patrons the best services and programs. We need to be absolutely open about that. We need to include our patrons, because who better to improve services and programs than the people who actually take advantage of them? We need to set ourselves up to smoothly incorporate updates

and upgrades, tweaks and adjustments. We need to not worry about being perfect or final.

I think what these two writers are saying is key to the future of libraries. No longer can we look at services as static creatures, devoid of change and enjoying sovereign immunity from user input. Library services will evolve and change or the services and the libraries hosting them simply will not succeed.

Nicole Engard submitted her post, "[Another Reason I Want My MLIS](#)", where she goes over her routine for triaging information from the many blogs she reads. Nicole is in the MLIS program at Drexel and her enthusiasm for the degree and the profession is obvious when she writes:

by getting my MLIS new doors will be open to me. I'll have the chance to work in positions where I get to do 2 things I love - develop applications & web solutions and help others find and use new tools to make their jobs more productive!

Eric Schnell directs us to his post, "[Do Any Librarians Out There Cha-Cha?](#)", about the search engine/service [ChaCha](#). Writing about the guided search option, Eric asks "are any librarians out there a part of the ChaCha underground?" (I love that phrase, *ChaCha underground*.)

This is the second time this week I've heard someone mention ChaCha, the first being Stephen Abram in Columbia. ChaCha's approach of paying guides to answer questions reminds me of a debate I had with some Microsoft people in Redmond last January. Several librarians, along with other techies, were brought out to Seattle to talk with Microsoft about search. Called SearchChamps, we were shown several new products and asked for our opinions and ideas. I had the opportunity to look at their [Live QnA](#) service (still in beta), which uses people to answer other people's questions. I suggested that Microsoft use librarians as part of their base of experts by working with telephone and email reference librarians in order to harness the many answers they provide every day. Imagine Microsoft providing free knowledge management software to library systems in return for the ability to harness all of that knowledge for web search. How useful would that be for your library? I know I'd like it at mine! Anyway, Microsoft didn't like the idea -- I really don't think they "get" the amount of knowledge librarians create and sift through every day. Oh well, perhaps someone else will recognize this as a good idea.

And now for a few things I noticed this week:

Information about the new [Microsoft Zune](#) confuses me more than ever. Don't get me wrong, it looks like a good device, but it throws the whole DRM issue right back into our faces. We've subscribed to NetLibrary and Recorded Books and all the services that rely upon Microsoft's "Play for Sure" program and now we face an entirely new DRM structure that does not work with everything we've already invested in. This is insane. Where are the library directors in this debate? Taken as a whole, libraries spend hundreds of millions of dollars every year on downloadable audio and video content. If directors were to work together (god forbid) they may actually be able to influence the big two makers of Apple and Microsoft.

Another [study of world Internet penetration](#) shows the US in the lead with a penetration rate of 68.7%. That's good, of course, but what does it also mean? Well, it means that over 30% of Americans do not use the Internet, and that's over 90 million people. How are we reaching/serving them?

In [Make Subscribing to Blogs Easy](#), David King (soon to be Digital Branch & Services Manager at the [Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library](#)) reminds us that many librarians and most library users do not know where to look for RSS feeds, nor do they know the terminology of syndication. So, *keep it simple*. Call it subscribing, move the link to the top of the page, and give them a "how-to" page and show them how it works. Well said, David. We *are* librarians, after all, and we should be teaching our users how to use this new technology.

Finally, be sure to visit Chris Zammarelli's [Libraryola](#) next week for the 55th installment of [Carnival of the Infosciences](#).

Thanks for visiting!

["carnival of the infosciences"](#)
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Posted by Michael on September 18, 2006 01:00 AM | [Permalink](#)

Comments

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With well-run physical libraries that offer free books and other media, expert reference service, story hours, youth programs, adult literacy programs, local history...

Posted by: [walt crawford](#) | [September 18, 2006 12:05 PM](#)

But we must be careful not to think all of our users have net access at home. We need to offer net access in our branches but we also must not forget that some of our users (at least for a while yet) need alternative access to information we provide electronically. The digital divide will be with us for some years.

Posted by: [Michael Casey](#) | [September 18, 2006 12:10 PM](#)

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