

# Web2 in Scottish Libraries

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## 1. Introduction

The Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC) and the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland (CILIPS) are the national professional organisations for librarians in Scotland. SLIC is the advisory body to the Scottish Government on library matters and has institutional level memberships from across the different sectors. On the other hand, CILIPS (a branch of CILIP UK) is a purely membership based organisation, representing the interests of individual librarians and supporting their professional development. The two organisations share staff and resources, including web services, to provide a unified central support service for the library profession in Scotland.

The SLAINTE (Scottish Libraries Across the INTErnet) website was developed in 1995 and has continued to grow as an important source of information and communication for the library and information community in Scotland. The advent of Web2.0 technologies led the SLIC and CILIPS information team (referred to just as the information team in future) to reassess the web presence and electronic content of the organisations.

In September 2007 we started to look at these new technologies in terms of how they could affect both our organisational objectives (as a professional membership based body) and the work of the organisations we serve (i.e. libraries). This process identified two distinct objectives for the organisations: (1) to incorporate Web2.0 services within SLAINTE to facilitate membership engagement and professional communication and (2) to encourage the uptake of Web2.0 and new technologies within library services in Scotland.

## 2. Why Web2.0?

The rationale for adopting and promoting Web2.0 technologies has been based on a number of perceived benefits related to the services themselves. These include:

- Low or no cost associated with most services
- No requirement for technical or computer programming expertise
- Instant updating and web publishing functionality
- Facilitate interactive services and enables user input
- Enhance the promotion of libraries and library services

### 3. SLAINTE 2.0

The first part of this process was to identify which Web2.0 functions could be used to achieve our objectives and then to decide which services to adopt (since multiple suppliers offer the same or similar products). As regards this latter issue, we selected the more well-known and commonly used Web2.0 brands as these services were perceived as being more reliable and also possibly more durable.

The Web2.0 services became known as SLAINTE 2.0, which is composed of the following elements:

**Table 1**

Function	Service	Objective
Blog	Wordpress	To create an informal space for news and discussion
Micro-blog	Twitter	To provide frequent short updates and contribute to virtual professional networks
Photo sharing	Flickr	To promote libraries and library related activities and to host archival images
Presentation sharing	SlideShare	To share ideas and best practice and to make our CPD output more widely available
Video sharing	YouTube	To promote libraries and library related activities and to share existing content from SLAINTE with a wider audience
Social bookmarking	Delicious	To collate and share a wide range of trusted resources related to the library and information profession

### 4. Barriers to using Web2.0 in Scottish libraries

As membership based organisations, SLIC and CILIPS received feedback from the Scottish library and information community over the course of our experimentations. It became clear that there were still considerable barriers to the widespread adoption of Web2.0 and social networking websites in Scottish libraries.

The main difficulty reported by Scottish librarians was that access to Web2.0 sites had been blocked by institutional firewalls and filtering systems. This complaint was experienced across sectors – from the public sector (local authorities) through to education (schools, colleges and universities), as well as in the health and corporate (e.g. law) libraries.

Blocking of Web2.0 services in this way tends to be justified on several grounds:

1. Child (or general user) protection – based on the argument that some Web2.0 services may be used to host material that is considered inappropriate or offensive. High profile cases such as “happy slapping” and cyber-bullying videos on YouTube, have only served to strengthen this type of argument.
2. Employee management – some employers have expressed concern that their staff may spend time during the working day engaging in social networking, when they should be completing work related tasks.

3. Staff training – we found that there were some basic misconceptions about what was involved in using Web2.0 services; people were concerned about limited technical expertise, expense, durability of services and the time required to maintain Web2.0 services.
4. Traditional professional schools of thought - an interesting dichotomy between the more traditional, authoritative methods of information delivery and the new user focused approach that breaks social barriers and allows access and involvement for all; top-down versus bottom-up perspective.

As a national organisation representing librarians, SLIC decided to publish guidelines and develop supporting web content in order to overcome these barriers and enable Scottish library services to experiment more freely with emerging technologies.

## **5. SLIC Web2.0 Guidelines**

The guidelines will be published in printed form in summer 2009 and distributed to senior management figures within Scottish library services as an advocacy mechanism; since senior staff have more power to effect change within organisations, we felt that targeting this group was likely to have greater impact. An electronic version of the guidelines will also be published, together with a range of webpages that aims to support and promote the development of Web2.0 technologies by library services.

Whereas the printed guidelines were intended to challenge perceptions of Web2.0 and dispel some common misconceptions, the web content has been developed as a source of practical support ('how to' advice and guidelines) and a means of sharing good practice or ideas for implementation. A central feature of this is individual case studies provided by library services, which are intended as a practical source of advice and inspiration for colleagues.

## **6. Web2.0 in practice in Scottish library services**

### **6.1 Public library services**

One of the first public library services in Scotland to adopt Web2.0 services was East Renfrewshire, which attracted UK-wide press coverage by creating Facebook accounts for its cultural and leisure services (including libraries, theatres and sports facilities). East Renfrewshire, on the outskirts of Glasgow, is one of the smallest local authorities in Scotland with a population of around 89,000 people. The East Renfrewshire Facebook accounts were created around January 2008, initially with individual pages for each of the community libraries within the area, however, the focus has shifted onto the central East Renfrewshire libraries account<sup>1</sup>, which

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<sup>1</sup> Available: <http://www.facebook.com/home.php?ref=home#/pages/Barrhead-United-Kingdom/East-Renfrewshire-Libraries/19603189193?sid=6c95a5177170946effea13a1d592e4ff&ref=search>

Last accessed: 08/06/09

continues to be maintained and now includes information about events, competitions and new books, as well as both archival and contemporary photographs. The individual library accounts still exist but do not appear to be regularly updated.

The next significant development in using Web2.0 within Scottish public libraries came from the City of Edinburgh Council library service. As part of SLIC and CILIPS' ongoing commitment to supporting library services to experiment with Web2.0 technologies, we developed a framework for Web2.0 adoption and presented this to colleagues in Edinburgh libraries. The framework, which will be incorporated within the SLAINTE2.0 website, was based on models of good practice in US public libraries.

The Edinburgh model (titled Tales of One City), which was implemented by an independent consultant, mirrors the framework in the breadth of services (combining a blog, twitter, flickr, delicious bookmarks) but the step of linking with traditional web content (i.e. the library services' website) has not yet been achieved. Instead, the services are linked through a NetVibes start-up page.<sup>2</sup>

## 6.2 The National Library of Scotland (NLS)

The National Library of Scotland holds a number of unique and special collections on behalf of the people of Scotland. Due to the physical collection being housed in Edinburgh, NLS staffs have developed innovative ways to open access to these stimulating collections.

Scottish Screen Archive, under the jurisdiction of the NLS, has used a video channel on YouTube<sup>3</sup> to encourage access to the rich variety of video clips covering the history of Scottish life

The Digital Library team in NLS created a blog<sup>4</sup> to disseminate to fellow professionals and the world at large what they were experimenting and researching with to provide wider access to collections.

NLS also has a dedicated Flickr site<sup>5</sup> where people can view some excellent digitisations of their photographic collections.

## 6.3 Education Libraries

The school library sector is possibly the worst affected by the aforementioned access barriers; education departments often choose to block access to all Web2.0 or social

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<sup>2</sup> Available: <http://www.netvibes.com/talesofonecity#General> Last accessed: 08/06/09

<sup>3</sup> Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/user/NLofScotland> Last accessed: 08/06/09

<sup>4</sup> Available at <http://digitalnls.wordpress.com/2009/05/> Last accessed: 08/06/09

<sup>5</sup> Available at: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/nlscotland/collections/> Last accessed:08/06/09

networking sites within school buildings in attempts to protect pupils from inappropriate content. As a result, there has been very limited application of Web2.0 in school library services.

Further and Higher Education institutions (colleges and universities) in Scotland have greater freedom in this respect but there is limited evidence of widespread adoption or innovation. Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh, however, is a good example of joined-up services; with a blog, twitter, flickr, Facebook and YouTube profiles maintained and featured on the library homepage.<sup>6</sup>

Although targeted at the general user, the objectives for using Web2.0 services within library authorities closely mirrors the SLIC/CILIPS organisational objectives as outlined in Table 1.

## **7. Professional networking using Web2.0**

Web2.0 widens the professional network you are part of; most librarians were previously bound to local and national networks that depended on physical gatherings, however, this is no longer the case in the electronic sphere. Twitter, in particular, enables librarians to make global contacts with fellow professionals who have the same goals and interests. Thus, a thriving community of librarians are networked via Twitter, following each other's updates to share information and advice in an informal environment.

SLIC and CILIPS believe that this can be an important source of continuing professional development (CPD) for library staff. Furthermore, the scale and openness of professional networking using Web2.0 can promote creative thinking and can push the boundaries in terms of service delivery and innovation. A vital factor is that there is no hierarchy involved in this type of interaction, which means that everyone can contribute regardless of their job role, leading to a richness of perspective.

## **8. Web2.0 and the 'amplification' of professional events**

A further example of using Web2.0 in professional activities is the "amplification" of conferences or meetings.<sup>7</sup> The use of a service such as SlideShare allows for the widespread dissemination of conference output, with the possibility of simultaneous physical delivery and web publication. Similarly, photos and videos of events can be posted on sites such as flickr and YouTube to increase the amplification. In addition, the process of live-blogging (using Twitter or other services) allows for the contribution of physical and virtual delegates over the course of an event.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.qmu.ac.uk/lb/> Last accessed: 08/06/09

<sup>7</sup> Dempsey, Lorcan (2007) *The amplified conference*, Lorcan Dempsey's Weblog: On libraries, services and networks Available: <http://orweblog.oclc.org/archives/001404.html> Last accessed: 08/06/09

At the CILIPS Annual Conference in June 2009, live-blogging was used as a means of opening up the event to a wider audience and in promoting discussion between attendees. This model depends on the participation of physical attendees in order to provide a live commentary of the conference's progress, which can then be followed via the Internet. The event was assigned a hashtag identifier (#cilips09) to enable interested parties to track the output on Twitter and other Web2.0 sites.

In addition, the live-blogging service CoverItLive was used to facilitate this process, with coverage embedded within the SLAINTE homepage. The benefit of using a service of this kind is that, although it is compatible with Twitter (i.e. can be linked to specified user accounts or hashtags), users do not have to have Twitter accounts to participate; rather, they can access the embedded content within the website and post comments or pose questions. CoverItLive can also be used to display photos and other types of files, as well as live video and audio.

The amplified coverage was popular with both physical and virtual delegates and this strategy is likely to be applied in future events held by SLIC and CILIPS. A potential concern, however, may lie in the sustainability of physical events; with such live coverage available online and for free, delegates in the future may increasingly opt to take part virtually rather than pay to attend in person.

## **9. Conclusions**

Web2.0 services are increasingly becoming embedded in many areas of life as more people, from teenagers to national governments, recognise and harness these powerful communication tools. Similarly, libraries and librarians all over the world are using Web2.0 technologies to promote services, engage with users and network with colleagues to support professional development. As such, SLIC and CILIPS believe that social media have great potential to enhance the delivery of library services and to contribute to the professional development of library staff. As service users increasingly come to expect interactive online services in all spheres of life, libraries must keep pace with developments elsewhere in order to provide a responsive service for the future.