

# Exploration of the use of Library 2.0 and its role in the transformation of personalised services in Italian libraries

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## Introduction to the presentation

In this presentation I want to explore how library 2.0 can enhance user experience and develop information and services in Italy even if this new set up of models is more evolutes in the rest of Europe and in America. It will be interesting understand the case of Italy where the phenomenon seems to be more an argument of discussion than a reality.

The research behind this presentation and done for Master in Information and Library Management at Northumbria University, investigates how web 2.0 technologies suggest changes in how libraries provide access to their collections. The use of these web 2.0 technologies and applications will constitute a significant and substantive change in the use of on-line and personalised services of libraries. The library's collection will change, becoming more interactive and fully accessible, focusing more on the facilitation of information transfer and information literacy rather than providing controlled access to it. The presentation explores how library 2.0 would transform the library services and makes them more personalised, more interactive and more based along web 2.0 lines.

In fact the features of web 2.0 applied to library services start just right now to be recognised in the Italian libraries world as a field where the new services will come. While our libraries are engaged to apply standards of library system from more advanced countries, abroad the debates look to hit the centre of library organisation around the services and their supply to clients. In the space created by ICT (Information and Communication Technology) and in the on-line and personalised library's services, the need of user found a new condition.

The international reality gives examples of libraries that offer services through the web 2.0 technologies. The Italian situation shows that the changes of users-oriented on-line services are still limited because in the best case we wonder to manage the traditional services as cataloguing, document acquisition and recording. Even if the examples of tools of web 2.0 are many in Italy, a few are the reality in Italy that uses the features of web 2.0 where they attempt to match the centrality of users and the personalisation of the service.

However in this "*innovative*" context we have to consider that the evolution of web could accelerate a process of changing in the Italian libraries toward an organization services oriented instead documents oriented.

This presentation starts from a definition and theory for "Library 2.0".

*Library 2.0 is the application of interactive, collaborative, and multi-media web-based technologies to web-based library services and collections (Maness 2006)*

It suggests that recent thinking describing the changing Web as "Web 2.0" will have substantial implications for libraries, and recognizes that while these implications keep very close to the history and mission of libraries, they still necessitate a new paradigm for librarianship specifically address with Web 2.0 technologies such as synchronous messaging and streaming media, blogs, wikis, social networks, tagging and RSS feeds. These technologies might intimate changes in how libraries provide access to their collections and user support for that access.

## **Explaining the topic**

Web 2.0 is a term being used more and more frequently. In contrast with the primal web (which can be thought of as Web 1.0), Web 2.0 allows people to interact more easily in a web environment. Typical Web 2.0 technologies include blogs, wikis, and content-sharing sites such as Flickr ([www.flickr.com/](http://www.flickr.com/)) (for images) and YouTube ([www.youtube.com/](http://www.youtube.com/)) (for video). Web 2.0 features encourage interactivity: blogs can have comments enabled, wikis allow viewers to change and/or comment on content, and Flickr and YouTube allow people to comment on and rate content. There is even a movement that suggests libraries adopt Web 2.0 tools to implement what is termed "Library 2.0" (Maness, 2006).

## **Objectives**

I began the research with the presumption that Web 2.0 technologies are the "next big thing" in libraries because they offer social networking capabilities in providing information and services to the library's clientele.

The research want question these 4 objectives:

1. Understand **which typology of tools 2.0 are adopted by libraries** in Italy;
2. Explore if these **new services affect library users' information** seeking behaviours, communication styles and expectations;
3. Find out if these technologies have been adopted to improve library services before **feasibility study and monitoring**;
4. Use the research to put forward a "**good practice**" framework for libraries using Web 2.0 technologies.

## **Methodology for feeding the data**

How the title of presentation says, the research would like to explore the use of Library 2.0 in the Italian libraries and understand its function in the transformation of services in the library and in particular in the renovation of those personalised. This paper presents the results of data that come from:

- 1) a telephone-based interviews survey designed to find out which Web 2.0 technologies are being adopted by members of the library and information management professions in Italy, for both personal and professional purposes, and the factors that influence their adoption

- 2) a short questionnaire (8 questions) on-line created by Bonaria Biancu over the application of 2.0 in Italy and their implementation in the libraries. In June and early July 2008, Italian librarians and information managers were invited to complete an anonymous web-based survey asking about their use of a range of Web 2.0 tools and new communications technologies. The questionnaire was not scientific. It works as an attempt to identify the trends in the adoption of 2.0 tools in libraries. It was proposed for a training course about Web 2.0 and libraries held in Rome.

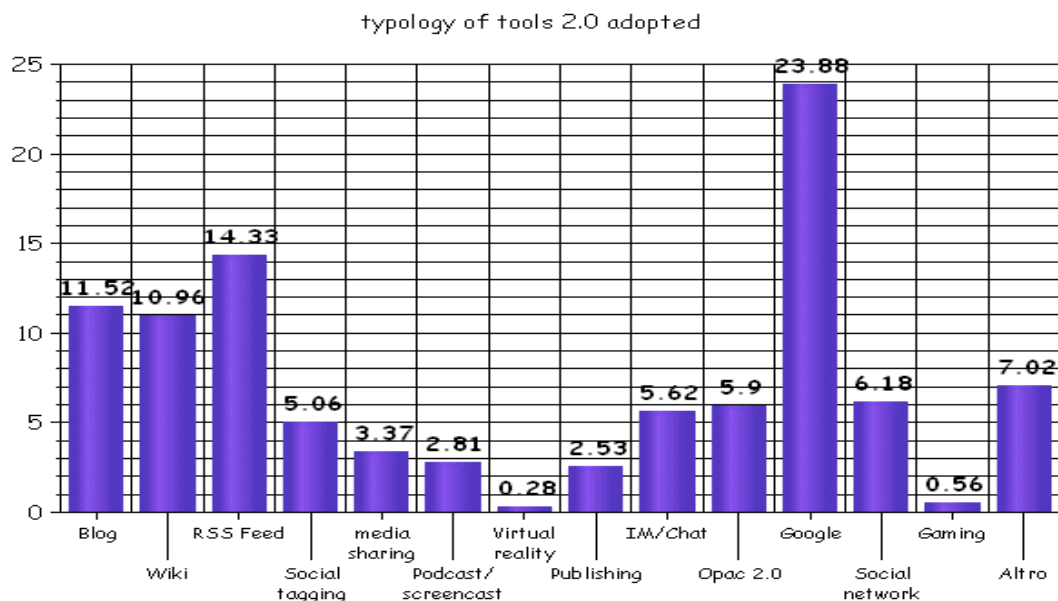
## Answers to questions

Library 2.0 in Italy is a not a very widespread experience, while the popularity of the web 2.0 in countries like USA, it is not surprising because they started to speak (and apply) about these technology for the first time at the conference *Internet Librarian 2005* held in Monterey, California and continued to improve these technologies. However the check on local search engines and Web sites finds many evidence of library web 2.0 in Italy and it is important to say that the numbers increase every day. We understand that libraries in Italy don't always need to adopt the web 2.0 features to enhance the libraries personalised services. In any case it seems to be a beneficial experience that librarians wonder to do as the technology suggested to improve service based on web 2.0.

### Objective 1

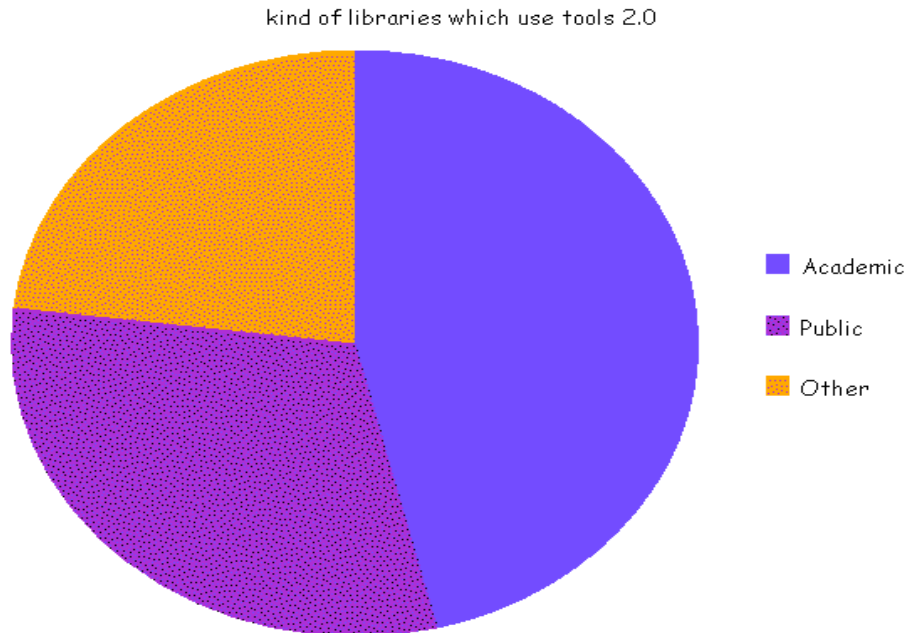
After this introduction we are ready to show the answer to our question and define the research's objectives.

#### 1. Which typology of tools 2.0 are adopted by libraries in Italy?



Google, wiki, rss feed, blog are the tools most used in Italian libraries.

## 2. Which kind of library use tools 2.0?

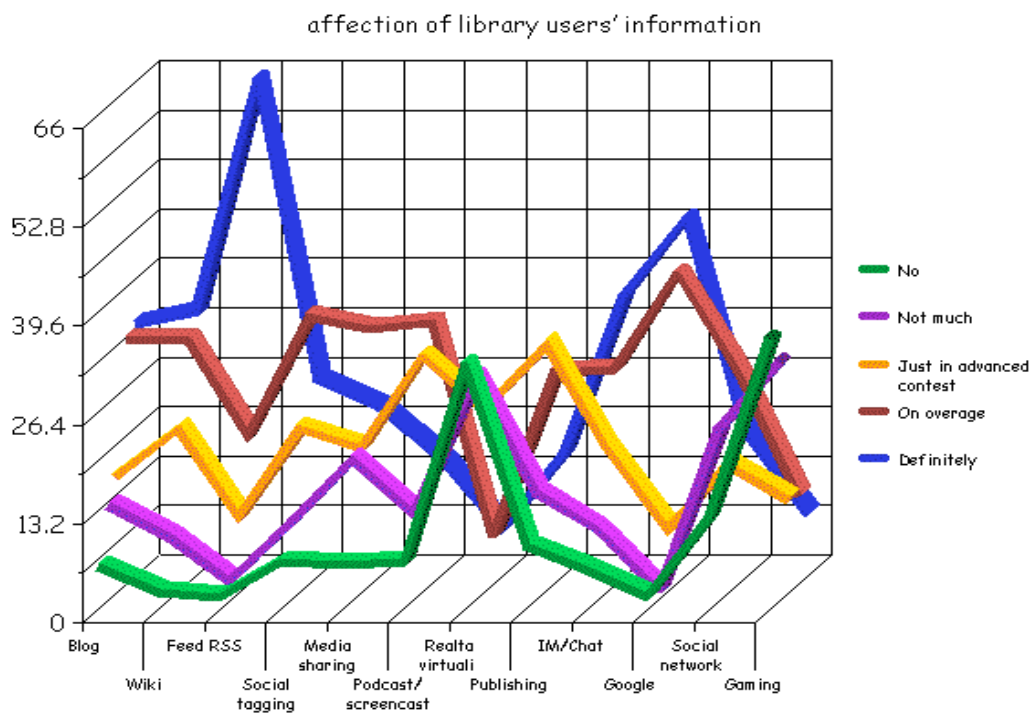


Public and academic librarians have been the most influential movers of L2, therefore for it to work effectively and efficiently L2 should be determined and formed by librarians and library users.

### Objective 2

Go ahead with questions 3 and 4

- 3. The new services offered by tools 2.0 affect library users' information seeking behaviours, communication styles and expectations?**
- 4. Can these technologies be adapted to improve library services in order to change library environment and information landscape?**



In Italy there is enthusiasm and the library wish to try new technological tools, but is difficult to understand if the application of these tools could be change the profile of traditional service and bring it to new application of personalised facilities for patron. Many attractive experiences for the library 2.0 were found in the Web and the reliability of these tools applied to the service in the libraries appears completely successful. In Italy, in the general opinion of librarians and information specialists, the libraries try to study new function for libraries because they necessity to capture audience and create new user communities through these 2.0 tools. The opinion of three participants to the questionnaire

*“That means have more staff equipped and more money. It seems in contradiction with ‘economy’ commonly attributed to technology”*

*“I add my impression, ‘that these tools are still rather far from widespread and from being metabolized by the Italians”*

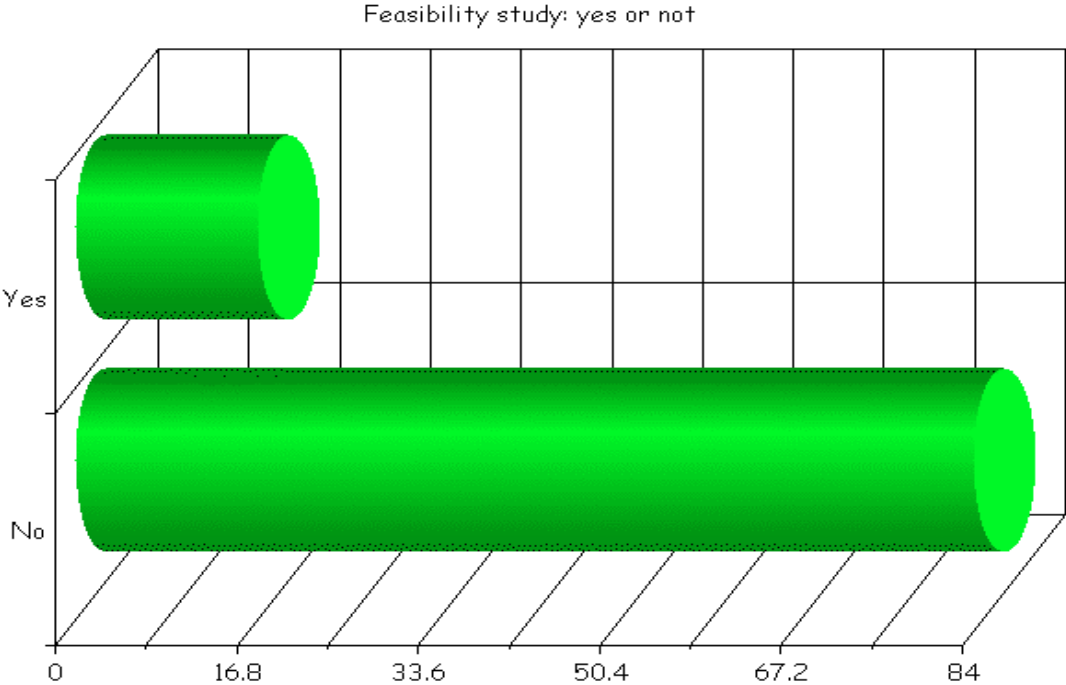
*“I think the 2.0 applications require a cultural revolution (the sharing of knowledge and of doing, thinking and acting collaboratively) that is currently underway, but not yet implemented. A great pressure comes from technological developments in mobile communications; cultural change takes much, much more time to adoption of new technologies”.*

It emerges that the experience of library 2.0, even if much appreciated, isn't still a manageable practice in Italy because it requires good technological skills from librarians and from users.

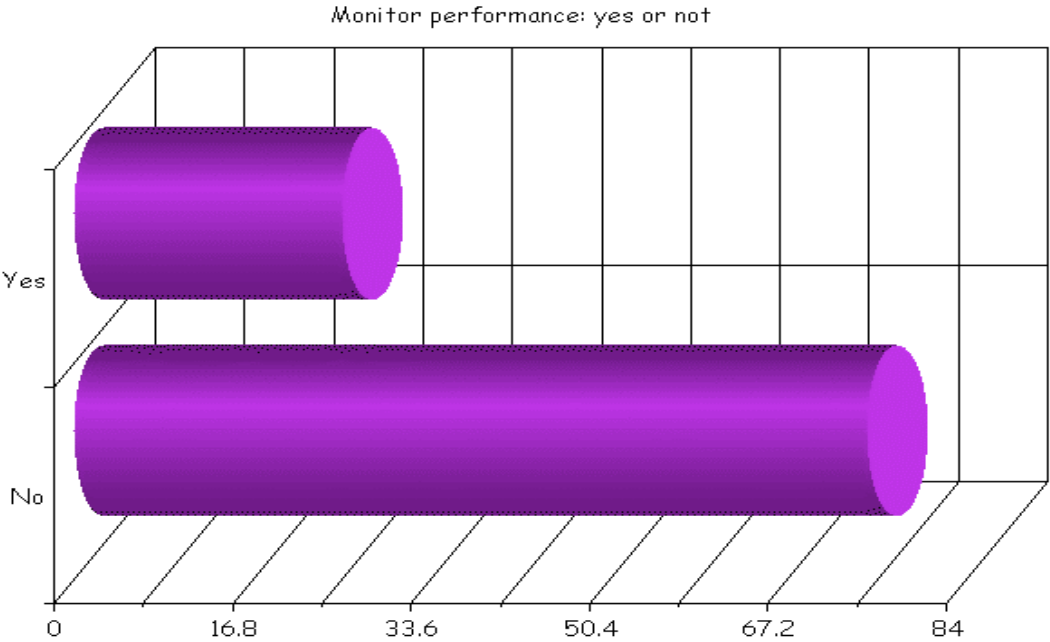
There are the charts that answered to question: Do you think the following tools may be useful in a library - not even necessarily yours? (E.g. to improve services, to bring more users to make more efficient procedures etc.)

And the last questions: If the library in which the participants work use 2.0 tools, if it did a feasibility study in which they were analyzed the pro and con, costs and benefits?

**5. Did it a feasibility study in which they analyzed costs and benefits?**



**6. Constantly monitor their impact on work activities, information behaviours, effectiveness and efficiency?**



The charts show clearly that feasibility study and monitoring are not very used practices.

*“Difficult to examine the findings of these activities. No work has been performed after programming, analysis, etc..”*

*“The adoption of web 2.0 tools is too recent to be able to assess the real impact”*

## Library 2.0 examples

*Library 2.0 in Italy is a not very widespread experience...true or false?*

This means that there are many library web 2.0 experiences but most of them are inaccessible through search engines and directories. We will see some example of the cited 2.0 tools.

**Wiki** Fondazione Rinascimento Digitale

<http://documenti.rinascimento-digitale.info/>

David Lubin Memorial Library **blog**

<http://www.lubinlib.typepad.com/>

Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana **RSS** (Really Simple Syndication)

<http://marciana.venezia.sbn.it/internal.php?codice=508>

Biblioteca Comune di Empoli on **Skype**

<http://www.comune.empoli.fi.it/biblioteca/servizi/skype.htm>

**Social network** Biblioteche e bibliotecari italiani per il web 2.0

<http://biblioteca20.ning.com/>

**Social bookmarking** of DISG, Univ. Roma

<http://delicious.com/biblioteca.disg>

**Flickr** Biblioteche Brianza

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/brianzabiblioteche/collections/>

Button with UNIMIB logo on **Google**

<http://www.biblio.unimib.it/go/85055321>

## “Good practice” framework for libraries using Web 2.0 technologies

The key elements that need to be considered when using the technologies of web 2.0 in libraries extrapolate by the answers and the general finding of this research, were highlighted to prepare a good practice guide. This guide would help to understand the requirement for a library that wonder to be a library 2.0.

- The tools of web 2.0 can organize information and bring it nearer to the user's demand, improving the service delivered by the library
- The tools of web 2.0 are useful to create a user-oriented library and to reach out users
- The tools of web 2.0 have a good potentiality to communicate the intention of library what does generated/created content and to share this new content
- The tools of web 2.0 in library transform the service because they produce a new impact in the services to be evaluated, make the services more

interactive, push the information The tools of web 2.0 change the mentality of users and of librarians in order to improve and help to share their expertise

- The tools of web 2.0 give a new arena for doing more things that we used to do in person and help to reach out to users who no longer come into the library

## Reflection/Conclusion

It has been said that to revitalize the way to serve and interact with the customers, the model of library should be new or renewed through the web 2.0. In fact, the constant encouragement and the purposeful change in the library's services would be the objective of this research : increase in available technologies of web 2.0 helps libraries to create a new models of services that before were not possible and gives them the ability to offer improved customer service opportunity.

But, what libraries could have done differently was consider the evaluation/estimation of this process. If the ideas behind Library 2.0 are built upon necessity for change, for example reaching out new users, building new services, and responding rapidly to changing customer demands, each of these requires organizations to develop the ability to quickly and regularly initiate to transform the service in library, have to be considered together with the evaluation of feasibility.

Bell (2008) believes that many libraries are “*putting the cart before the horse*” or expression as ‘*before you can build a house you have to lay the foundation*’ (Michael Casey and Laura Savastinuk)

They believe that libraries are employing technologies before we figure out which problems they might solve:

*Whether it is owing to a lack of time, a desire to quickly implement new technologies, or allowing bandwagon mentality to rule, rarely do most of us allow sufficient time to carefully design a strategy for technology innovation. Not only do we likely fail to conduct an analysis to first determine the feasibility of a new technology application, but we rarely take the time to adequately determine if our users would value the new service. In a nutshell, our approach is to identify a solution before we fully understand the problem. (Bell)*

At Internet Librarian 2007 Liz Lawley said, “*You have to figure out what the problem is first before you come up with a solution. Energy focused on implementing new tools and programs is wasted if we don't know what our users really want. Without knowing that, we create more work for ourselves with hit or miss initiatives. In the past two years much of the discussion of Library 2.0 has been focused on little things we can do to better serve our users. We try to “get them where they are” by implementing IM reference and creating a presence on social networks such as Flickr, MySpace and Facebook. However, we have to be careful to not flood ourselves with new projects until we have a clear understanding of what it is we're trying to do and where we want to go. And in the spirit of Library 2.0, that means first figuring out what our users want and need. Maybe it is time we all take a step back and have a mini re-evaluation of Library 2.0, what it is, and how it can help us better serve our users.*

Library 2.0 will look different for each library, based in part on users' diverse needs. Once library have a good assessment of community of users, it is possible to formulate a plan of ideas for working toward services that can be called library 2.0. The libraries are looking to improve service offerings that will better serve the current users and better reach potential users. Even if the potentiality of web 2.0 in library are great, it is important to remembered that what works for one library may not work for other. First of all the library have to consider the need of the specific community of users when creating, evaluating, or updating services. Knowing the community of current and potential users and what they want and need is the first step when thinking about how Library 2.0 can benefit the organization and its users (Casey, M. and Savastinuk, L., 2007). Much as the library always done, they should continue to properly investigate and plan the services they will provide. Just because an idea as Library 2.0 sounds good doesn't mean it will work for one particular library. That being said, it is still important to take all suggestion seriously. What may initially sound like a good idea, yet seems impossible to pull off, and might turn out to be quite feasible after some investigation.

**So, although new tools of 2.0 technologies can help to reach users and improve services, the library have to be guarded of making any investment in this without first investigating if the library really need it.** In fact, it seems that the Italian libraries have created Blog, Rss feed or other interesting web 2.0 tool, without thinking to real use but encourage themselves by the enthusiasm: *"In this moment it seems to be an experiment toward which there are enthusiasm and attention"* said an interviewer. After the library has decided to implement or transform a service or procedure, the planning process should begin and for all how have a stake in change it is important to be involved in the planning process. Someone from technology department, who knows the answer to technical questions, should be involved. Then, the library wants this to succeed with the public, right? So, a marketing representative will need to be included. What about the frontline staff who will be promoting the service and instructing customer on how to use it? There the library has to be sure to plan the implementation of the service but also plan to review it. So, what makes a service Library 2.0 is the planning and structure built into it that needs to include frequent evaluation to ensure that it is meeting its expected outcomes. When the service no longer meets its expectations it could be updated or cancelled. Then the library have to understand if the service delivered answer to the users needs or it is just an adaptation to the new suggestions from the web. So if at the fist the research considered the application of web 2.0 in the library adequate to every typology of libraries In order to address the information needs of clients and especially future patrons, libraries must take the responsibility to understand and adopt the new and inexpensive technologies available only if they believe that they can create library services using these emerging tools to connect with the community.

Therefore, regard to the title proposed in this research, maybe, could be implemented with a new suggestion: not just the exploration of the use of library 2.0 but also the evaluation of the use of library 2.0 through users feed back, usage statistics, and other reports.