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Biography

Mary Kajewski is the Online Public Access to Libraries (OPAL) Trainer at the State Library of Queensland where she focuses on introducing emerging technologies and trends in the Internet and online training sector to the community, and State and public library staff via face-to-face training; and delivery of virtual online tutorials using web conferencing software that support remote and flexible learning options.

Emerging technologies changing our service delivery models

Abstract

Emerging technologies provide librarians with a unique opportunity to substantially enhance user centred services and facilitate and promote collaboration between libraries and their clients. This paper explores the range of free and inexpensive technologies that are available and have been simply implemented with practical and immediate benefits both for library staff and clients. It will demonstrate positive examples of integrating technologies such as blogs, wikis, RSS aggregators, podcasts, vodcasts, web conferencing, and instant messaging into library services and programs.

The paper will also report on the take up of these technologies by public libraries nationally and internationally and examine Australian public library use and promotion of these services to their clients. Questions around the level of use or non use by public libraries will be explored. These technologies have increased clients' interaction with and access to library services and collections. By providing information in alternative formats these technologies are meeting client's various and individual requirements, and reflect the increasing demand for services in virtual environments. A case study around the OPAL Training Project *Emerging Technology* course will examine library staff buy-in and involvement in the development of new services and explore the difference these technologies can make to our clients.

Introduction

The role of the library within the community and the services it offers to the community is rapidly changing. With the rise of online resources and new technologies, libraries interested in enhancing user services and providing unmediated and independent access to library services and collections have begun to look at ways of creating online communities. New technologies allow libraries to provide a more streamlined service to users by offering simple access to what they want, when they want it and in the format that they want it. In an effort to provide access to and market the optimal 24/7 content and service delivery, libraries are creating virtual communities through social software such as blogs, RSS feeds, Instant Messaging (IM), wikis, podcasts, vodcasts and web conferencing.

US librarian Michael Stephens, author of *Tame the Web* blog, suggests that the new collaboration and communication tools available today need to be used by librarians to better serve users. 'Libraries can now communicate with their markets directly'. If libraries fail, users may pass them by. Illinois reference librarian Schmidt specifically identifies the youth market in this equation 'the future of libraries depends on how well we meet the needs of today's young adults, who are far more tech-fluent than most librarians'.

Blogs

The word blog is short for web log. It refers to a particular category of website where the content is presented in a continuing sequence of dated entries. Put simply, a blog is an online diary. A

blog can be produced by one author or carried out collaboratively by a community of authors. Blogs are websites that contain brief entries displayed in reverse chronological order. The newest entry is at the top of the webpage and can be updated at anytime – hourly, daily, weekly or monthly.

The trend to blog creation gained increased momentum with the introduction of automated publishing systems, particularly *Blogger* <www.blogger.com>. People use services such as *Blogger* to simplify and speed up the publishing process. Such software allows people with little or no technical background to update and maintain a blog. Creating a blog requires no HTML skills and you don't have to know anything about how to link from one page to another.

According to Clyde (2004), blogs have many implications for libraries, and library managers need to be aware of what blogs can do to promote the library and its services. Stephens (2006) believes that library blogs can be building blocks for communicating news and information to our users. He suggests we should aim to create a feeling of transparency by blogging about proposed projects and plans, and listening to users via comments and then responding to them.

Creating a blog for your library is a free, easy and fast way for you and your staff to communicate information to your public, and, if you choose, to provide a medium for your public to participate in service development. There are four major ways blogs can be used in the

library: as an information service, as a library service, as feedback tool, and as a professional awareness service.

Blogs as an Information Service

Use blogs as a library promotional tool to inform clients of changes and additions to library services and collections, and of news and current events.

Watson and Harper's (2006) unpublished findings in a study into the use of blogs, wikis and other collaborative technologies in the information industry in Australia found that more public libraries are using blogs rather than wikis and that twenty-two percent of public libraries used blogs to communicate with clients.

- The Madison Public Library in Wisconsin publish a blog titled *What's New* which provides basic news, new services and serves as a communications vehicle for the library
<www.madisonpubliclibrary.org/what_snew.html>
- Eastern Regional Libraries in Victoria publish a blog titled *What's New @ Eastern Regional Libraries*. Their blog is used for library announcements (eg Public Holiday closures, refurbishments), advertising library events, providing lists of new books, CDs and DVDs as well as the odd book review.
<easternregional.blogspot.com/>
- The Yarra Plenty Regional Library in Victoria publishes a blog titled *Yarra Plenty Blog*. Their blog aims to be a platform for interaction between the library and its users, including staff. Input and suggestions for content

are welcome from the community.
<yarraplentylibrary.blogspot.com/>

Blogs as a Library Service

List new books, videos, CDs, or DVDs as they are added to the collection. Review new titles and link them to relevant internet sites. Start an online book discussion. Provide links to author interviews. List book award announcements (Man Booker Prize, Children's Book Week awards, Pulitzer Prize Winners, etc). Establish a blog for young adults and encourage discussion amongst them. (Top 10 albums, Top 10 movies, Top PS2 or Xbox games) Start a children's blog. Advertise children's activities in the area. Children's literature - what's new and what will appeal to children of different reading levels and ages. Promote library services and resources in order to draw people into the library.

- The Madison Public Library in Wisconsin publishes a blog titled *MADreads*. featuring a brief book review every day. Ten staff members of the library contribute to the blog and readers are encouraged to interact with the reviews by posting comments and opinions.
<www.madisonpubliclibrary.org/madreads/>

Blogs as a Feedback Tool

Blogs encourage valuable feedback from clients via the comments link. Library patrons can provide information about their library experiences helping us to improve our library services. Polls and surveys can also be added to blogs using free software tools such as *Pollhost* <www.pollhost.com/>

Blogs as a Professional Awareness Tool

Use as a current awareness and professional aid that keeps you up-to-speed in your field. Blogs help you stay ahead of changes in technology and in the library profession. Cohen (2003), suggests that librarians need to stay ahead to justify their existence and so that consumers will look to the library as a place of currency, not just archives. Schwartz (2005) states:

‘You are probably thinking that no one will read what you have to say... I was surprised to discover that, as a librarian, you already have a built-in community of people interested in you and your perspective. You can, and probably will, meet people that you may not have met otherwise, becoming part of a very progressive segment of the LIS community.’

Examples

WebJunction is ‘an online community where library staff meet to share ideas, solve problems, take online courses - and have fun.’

<blog.webjunctionworks.org/>

Library Stuff is a ‘library weblog dedicated to resources for keeping current and professional development.’

<www.librarystuff.net/>

Researchbuzz provides news and information about search engines, databases, and other information collections for library staff.

<www.researchbuzz.org/wp/>

Wikis

A wiki, originating from the Hawaiian term for quick, is an open shared space for collaborative content contribution

and editing. Contribution to a wiki requires no HTML or programming knowledge. Unlike protected web pages, any information added to a wiki can be changed or deleted by *anyone*. Anyone with a Web browser can insert new pages, include new content to existing pages, or delete existing information. Previous versions of pages are saved for easy recovery from unwanted editing.

A wiki is a software engine that allows users to freely create and edit web page content using any web browser. There are many free open source wiki engines available to create wikis such as *MediaWiki*, *pbwiki*, and *seedwiki*. Wiki supports hyperlinks and has simple text syntax for creating new pages and crosslinks between internal pages on the fly.

Wiki is unusual among group communication mechanisms in that it allows the organization of contributions to be edited in addition to the content itself. Like many simple concepts, *open editing* has some profound and subtle effects on Wiki usage. Allowing everyday users to create and edit any page in a Web site is exciting as it encourages democratic use of the Web and promotes content composition by non-technical users.

Wikis for Library Staff

Library and Information Science Wiki (LISWiki). *LISWiki* was launched to provide the library community with an opportunity to investigate the usefulness of wikis. Its aim is to exist as a niche encyclopaedia comprising of library-related issues. The site claims that this wiki is intended to be developed, edited, organized, and maintained by anyone

and everyone interested.
<liswiki.com/wiki/Main_Page>

Library Instruction Wiki is a collaboratively developed resource, initiated by the Oregon Library, for librarians involved with or interested in instruction. 'All librarians and others interested in library instruction are welcome and encouraged to contribute.'
<instructionwiki.org/Main_Page>

Library Success: A Best Practices Wiki
Meredith Farkas designed this wiki to be 'a one-stop-shop for great ideas and information for all types of librarians. All over the world, librarians are developing successful programs and doing innovative things with technology that no one outside of their library knows about.' If you have accomplished something at your library that you believe is a success, or have materials that would be helpful to other librarians you are encouraged to add them to the wiki or provide a link to outside coverage. Farkas adds that 'this wiki belongs to the community of librarians who use it' and it should be a place where librarians can share ideas with one another and can learn to replicate the successes of other libraries.
<www.libsuccess.org/index.php?title=Main_Page#Technology>

Wikis for Library Clients

The Biz Wiki

The purpose of this wiki is to experiment with an alternative form of delivery of library information for current members of the Ohio University community. The wiki contains articles about business reference books, databases, websites, and other research guides and is intended as a library resource that students, faculty staff, and other librarians can contribute to.

<www.library.ohiou.edu/subjects/bizwiki/index.php/Main_Page>

The *Princeton Public Library* in the US has created a book club for its adult readers using wiki software. Once registered, readers can post reviews on the Wiki. *BookLoversWiki*
<booklovers.pbwiki.com/>.

RSS Feeds and Aggregators

RSS is an XML format that stands for *rich site summary* or *really simple syndication*. It allows users to receive content from sources such as news organizations, blogs and any web page that changes its content frequently. An RSS service consists of a list of items, each of which usually includes a headline, description, and a link to a web page. RSS newsreaders/aggregators allow you to view the pages you subscribe to together in the same place by automatically retrieving updates, and to stay current with new content soon after it is published without filling up your e-mail box or requiring you to check various web sites. In simple terms, RSS is used for the specific purpose of conveying information that a website or blog has been updated and allows quick scanning of the latest headlines from hundreds of web sites.

RSS is also a way for web publishers to syndicate their content - that is, make the content easier to redistribute. Most weblog software creates XML, RDF (Resource Descriptive Framework), and even ATOM (RSS's major rival which was created by people who felt that RSS could be improved upon) documents automatically, allowing you to syndicate your site via these technologies.

and journal alerts into their RSS readers and aggregators, as well as their web sites.”

<support.epnet.com/knowledge_base/detail.php?id=2485&t=h>

Podcasts

The word podcast originates from combining the words “iPod” and “broadcast”. A podcast is an audio program distributed over the internet. Consider it like a radio show. Each show consists of a series of individual episodes that you can listen to however, whenever, and wherever you want. You listen when it’s convenient for you. A podcast is unlike a regular downloaded audio recording or streaming audio, in that the content distribution is automatically done through RSS (*really simple syndication/ rich site summary*).

Similar to blogs, the standard way of receiving podcasts is by subscribing using a podcatcher or a podcast-client such as *iTunes, Juice, gPodder, Odeo* and *PodSpider*. Subscription may be through podcast directories or by physically entering a podcast’s RSS feed URL onto the client.

The only cost to your library to create a basic podcast is staff time. Most libraries already have the required equipment:

- Computer
- Microphone
- Speaker or ear/headphones
- Software for recording and mixing (*Audacity* or *Odeo* are both free to download)
- Software for encoding (*LAME MP3 Encoder* is free open source software)

- A podcatcher or podcast client (*iTunes, Juice* and *Odeo* are all free)

A study conducted by *PEW Internet and American Life Project* released in April 2005 found that:

More than 22 million American adults own iPods or MP3 players and 29% of them have downloaded podcasts from the Web so that they could listen to audio files at a time of their choosing. That amounts to more than 6 million adults who have tried this new feature that allows internet *broadcasts* to be downloaded onto their portable listening device (p. 1). Almost one in five (19%) of those aged 18-28 have iPods/MP3 players (p.2).

How can Public Libraries Use Podcasts?

- Use as a training tool for databases and online library resources
- Provide short, informational episodes on a topic combining voiceover by a narrator/host and interviews with clients.
- Give weekly updates about what is going on in your library and community
- Review new books and follow by interviews with patrons who have read the books
- Use recordings from presentations or turn presentations, lectures, and tutorials into podcasts
- Start a podcast with teens and allow them to drive it
- Podcast computer classes
- Provide library tours on podcast
- Provide professional development for staff – include on-demand

tutorials, copyright discussions, presentations by external professionals, book group discussion guides, summaries of new services or policies.

Examples

The Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County held a joke contest for teens and later podcast the best jokes. *Libraryloft Podcasts*
<www.libraryloft.org/podcasts.asp>

The *VALA2006 Conference* has podcasts of all papers delivered.
<www.vala.org.au/vala2006/prog2006.htm>

Lansing Public Library offers podcasts of their programmes and stating that podcasting offers patrons a chance to listen to content when convenient for them. *Podcast Directory*
<www.lansing.lib.il.us/podcast_directory.htm>

The Cheshire Public Library, in Connecticut offers a podcast for teens. 'The podcast is a teen-driven cultural magazine featuring teen writers, musicians, reviewers, commentators and more.' Contributors must be Cheshire residents in Grades 8-12. *Cheshire Public Library Podcast*
<www.cheshirelib.org/teens/cplpodcast.htm>

The State Library of Victoria is podcasting programs such as

- *National Treasures: A Curator's View*. 'Hear Margaret Dent, co-curator of National Treasures from Australia's Great Libraries, talk about the exhibition via podcast or audio download from the Library's website.'

<www.slv.vic.gov.au/programs/exhibitions/kmg/2006/nationaltreasures/program_of_events/curators_view.html>

- *The 2006 Keith Murdoch Oration*
<www.slv.vic.gov.au/programs/ltf/lectures/kmo/2006/index.html>
- Hear Lord Sebastian Coe's delivery of the 2006 Keith Murdoch Oration via podcast or audio download file.

Vodcasts

Vodcast is a term used to describe the online delivery of video on demand via Atom or RSS attachments. Wikipedia defines the term as 'an evolution specialized for video, coming from the generally audio-based podcast and referring to Video On Demand (VOD)'. Libraries are using vodcasts to illustrate what the library has done and to attract the community to attend future programmes.

Examples

The Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County produced a vodcast of a programme for teens *Fairy Tales Gone Bad @ImaginOn*.
<www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fkn6Dd0eZ88&mode=related&search=n>

The *Orange County Library Systems (Florida)* vodcasts show clips from recent library programs.
<mlcnet.org/blog/index.php/archives/129>

Web Conferencing

Web conferencing is used to convene group meetings or live presentations via the Internet. A web conference usually features a web version of a PowerPoint presentation and web co-browsing. Conference participants see whatever is on the presenter's screen; have voice

communication, either through a traditional telephone conference, or through VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol); and text messaging capacity that enables participants without a microphone to use text chat in place of voice. Most web conferencing software allows the participants and the presenter to record the session and save the text chat for future reference.

The term webinar is often used when referring to web conferencing. 'Webinar' is a combination of the words web and seminar. A webinar is intended to be interactive between the host and participants and the information is communicated according to a programme, with a starting and ending time. Generally the host speaks over a microphone, highlighting information being offered on screen, and the participants reply via their own microphones or text chat.

Peters (2004) suggests that as librarians, 'explorers of emerging frontiers', we need to be using audible content to improve online library services, thereby, changing what libraries can do and whom they can serve.

Rural and small libraries face special challenges. The major problem to overcome in providing library services to remote and rural Australia is that of distance. With the cost of travel ever-increasing libraries should consider the alternatives. Webinar or web conferencing tutorials, meetings and workshops can bring local library staff together to share ways of keeping their libraries up-to-date and thriving.

Free web conferencing software is available at *Jhatak*. *Jhatak* is free for individual users and also allows you to connect your camera to your computer for live video conferencing.
<www.jhatak.com>

Examples

Webjunction's *Rural Library Sustainability Project* in the United States, 'is a three-year project designed to provide rural library staff with resources to address their unique challenges and responsibilities.' Webjunction hosts monthly webinars, each lasting one hour, focusing on sustainability issues facing rural and small libraries. Sessions include:

- Connected to Learning;
- Empowering your staff and yourself to learn more; and
- Building Community Partnerships: Strengthening the library and your community by working together.

<www.webjunction.org/do/Navigation?category=11131>

The *SirsiDynix Institute* provides an ongoing forum for professional development in the library community. By providing 'free access to industry-leading speakers and events, their mission is to support librarianship and advance the work of librarians around the world.' The *SirsiDynix Institute* also make available past presentations free of charge for you to watch and listen to at your convenience.
<www.sirsidynixinstitute.com/>

Instant Messaging

Instant Messaging allows online communication between two or more people using typed text sent via computers in real-time. The *2004 PEW*

Internet and American Life Project study found that 53 million American adults use Instant Messaging on a daily basis. The use of Instant Messaging in libraries to provide a virtual reference service increases the availability of services to patrons, offers an alternative method of communication to patrons and brings the library to the community.

Schmidt and Stephens (2005) remind us that instant messaging may be a controversial topic for libraries and reference work, but many years ago we also debated telephone reference.

Examples

Homer Township Public Library in the US offers Instant Messaging.
<homerlibrary.org/>

St. Joseph County Public Library, also in the US, has user names for AIM, Yahoo! and MSN Messenger.
<libraryforlife.org/asksjcpl/asksjcpl.html>

Staff Buy-in

For staff buy-in you must train staff. Training staff is the keystone to successfully introducing and implementing new technologies and it need not be expensive. Training can be delivered in a hands-on environment, it can be a lecture style delivery or it can be a virtual online tutorial using inexpensive web conferencing technology.

As well as training staff it is important to research the technologies available to you and then creatively use them to better serve the needs of your specific community. If your clients don't use new technologies because they don't enhance services for them, staff will lose interest, deskill in the technologies,

and be reluctant to take up other emerging technologies.

In March, 2005 the State Library of Queensland's OPAL Training Project introduced a new course for Queensland public library staff. The course, *Emerging Technology*, is a one day hands-on course exposing the participants to blogs, wikis, RSS Feeds, podcasts, screencasts/ flash tutorials, and WiFi. State Library has been overwhelmed with requests to attend the training.

Whilst gathering research for the *Emerging Technology* course in early 2005, I was unable to find any public libraries in Australia using blogs, wikis, podcasts or screencasts. The past year has seen a steady growth in the use of these technologies in Australian libraries. As a result of the OPAL Training Project, Queensland claims twelve public library blogs, two wikis, many library staff reading Feeds and others considering ways to implement the new technology discovered during the course.

Librarians at The State Library of Queensland have also introduced some of these new technologies to assist in the delivery of services.

- The Family History Unit of the State Library of Queensland created a blog *Genique*, using a shared password aimed at keeping weekend staff up –to-date with what's happening in Family History.
- Screencast tutorials to be used for public library staff training are being created using the software product CaptureCamPro.
- The ICTS (Information and Communications Technology

Services) at the State Library of Queensland created a password protected Wiki for their staff. The wiki is a project to create a complete, up-to-date and reliable source for various ICTS documents.

- The Public Library Services Unit of the State Library of Queensland is developing a wiki for the Country Lending Service libraries of Queensland. Library staff throughout Queensland are encouraged to share their ideas, seek advice and support each other.
- The OPAL Training Project has been successfully using the Opal-Online and Talking Communities web conferencing software to deliver virtual online tutorials to library staff throughout Queensland.

Conclusion

In order to address the information needs of current and potential patrons, libraries must lead in adopting the new and inexpensive technologies available and use them to make available and market the full range of library services to the community. 'Any effort we make to integrate technology into our library to address basic challenges can lead to new services that satisfy both our staff and patrons' (Helling, 2006). These emerging technologies should be used to resolve problems, broaden the library service or ensure the survival or viability of a service whilst increasing effectiveness and saving the library money.

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