

What Is All the Fuss about Library 2.0? **

Diane Murley ***

Ms. Murley provides an overview of Library 2.0 principles and tools and discusses some of the difficulties in trying to arrive at a definition. She also presents reasons why law librarians should consider the possibilities of Library 2.0, and she suggests some ways that the principles and tools might be applied to law libraries.

¶1 When I decided to write this column about Library 2.0, I imagined an easy-to-write summary of the uses of Web 2.0 tools in libraries. My plan was to gather everything I could find on Library 2.0, read it in chronological order, and report here on the development of the concept and ways it could be applied to law libraries. I quickly discovered that there is no general agreement about the meaning of Library 2.0, much less agreement about whether Library 2.0 represents a new approach to library services. Everyone I read seemed to apply the term to their own vision of what the ideal library should look like. Nevertheless, some of the ideas labeled as “Library 2.0” are worth discussing in the law library context.

¶2 I will begin with some background on Web 2.0 and some of the attempts to define Library 2.0. I will then discuss why and how you might want to incorporate some Library 2.0 ideas into your law library.

Some Background on Web 2.0

¶3 The term “Web 2.0” was coined in 2004 during a brainstorming session that led to the Web 2.0 Conference.¹ In that preconference meeting, Web 2.0 was defined

* *Editor’s Note:* “Technology for Everyone” is a regular feature of *Law Library Journal*. In each article, author Diane Murley reviews a tool that can help law librarians do their jobs even better. To supplement her articles Ms. Murley posts ideas for using technology to improve or expand law library services on her Technology for Law Libraries blog, <http://tech4lawlibs.blog.asu.edu>.

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1. See Tim O’Reilly, CEO O’Reilly Media, Inc., *What Is Web 2.0: Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software* (Sept. 30, 2005), <http://www.oreillynet.com/lpt/a/6228>. The Web 2.0 Conference has been renamed the Web 2.0 Summit. See *About Web 2.0 Summit*, <http://www.web2summit.com/pub/w/62/about.html> (last visited Oct. 18, 2007).

by a long list of characteristics that distinguished those companies that continued to flourish after the dot-com crash.² A year and a half later, in response to “a huge amount of disagreement about just what Web 2.0 means,”³ one of the original conference planners issued a seventeen-page paper attempting to define what the group meant by the term.⁴ The following day, he posted the following “compact definition” on the O’Reilly Radar blog:

Web 2.0 is the network as platform, spanning all connected devices; Web 2.0 applications are those that make the most of the intrinsic advantages of that platform: delivering software as a continually-updated service that gets better the more people use it, consuming and remixing data from multiple sources, including individual users, while providing their own data and services in a form that allows remixing by others, creating network effects through an “architecture of participation,” and going beyond the page metaphor of Web 1.0 to deliver rich user experiences.⁵

Definitions of Web 2.0 still vary, with some focusing on the technology and others on the user. My favorite definition of Web 2.0 is Stephen Abram’s: “Web 2.0 is just the title of a conversation. There is no standard (at least not just a single one). We can all participate.”⁶

¶4 The Web 2.0 conferences, publications, and related activities are aimed at businesses, and they focus on principles and strategies for competing “in today’s Web 2.0 world”⁷ and in the “future-in-flux.”⁸ Although proposed definitions of Library 2.0 vary widely, I think most proponents would agree that it includes the application of Web 2.0 technologies and business ideas to library services.

Attempts to Define Library 2.0

¶5 The first use of the term “Library 2.0” appears to have been on Michael Casey’s blog, LibraryCrunch (www.librarycrunch.com), which debuted on September 20, 2005, with the subtitle “By a librarian trying to bring forth Library 2.0.”⁹ Mr. Casey’s early postings on LibraryCrunch defined Library 2.0 by pointing to examples of technology and practices that he believed met or did not meet the principles of Library 2.0.¹⁰ However, at

2. See O’Reilly, *supra* note 1.

3. *Id.*

4. *Id.*

5. Posting of Tim O’Reilly to O’Reilly Radar, http://radar.oreilly.com/archives/2005/10/web_20_compact_definition.html (Oct. 1, 2005).

6. Stephen Abram, *Web 2.0. —Huh?! Library 2.0, Librarian 2.0*, INFO. OUTLOOK, Dec. 2005, at 44, 45.

7. *E.g.*, O’Reilly Radar, *Why Web 2.0 Matters and How You Can Make the Most of It*, <http://www.oreilly.com/radar/web2report.csp> (last visited Oct. 18, 2007) (marketing language for John Musser et al.’s *Web 2.0 Principles and Best Practices* report available for purchase through the site).

8. *E.g.*, About Web 2.0 Summit, *supra* note 1.

9. Michael Stephens, *Foreword*, in MICHAEL E. CASEY & LAURA C. SAVASTINUK, *LIBRARY 2.0: A GUIDE TO PARTICIPATORY LIBRARY SERVICE* xv, xv (2007).

10. See Michael Casey, *What Library 2.0 Is Not*, LibraryCrunch, http://www.librarycrunch.com/2005/10/what_library_20_is_not.html (last visited Oct. 3, 2005).

least by October 11, 2005, he was attempting to state those principles more generally.¹¹ His early definitions included the practices of looking beyond librarianship to Web 2.0 technologies for ideas that could be used to improve library services and “continuing to examine and improve these services without being afraid to replace them at any time with newer and hopefully better services.”¹²

¶6 Mr. Casey continued to fine-tune his definition of Library 2.0, co-authoring with Laura Savastinuk a *Library Journal* article¹³ and a book on Library 2.0.¹⁴ Casey and Savastinuk focus on “user-centered change,” which “encourages constant and purposeful change, inviting user participation in the creation of both the physical and the virtual services they want, supported by consistently evaluating services.”¹⁵ Technology is not a necessary part of Library 2.0 as defined by Casey and Savastinuk.¹⁶ In their book, Casey and Savastinuk state that any definition of Library 2.0 must include at least the following:

- Library 2.0 is a model for constant and purposeful change.
- Library 2.0 empowers library users through participatory, user-driven services.
- Through the implementation of the first two elements, Library 2.0 seeks to improve services to current library users while also reaching out to potential library users.¹⁷

The first principle is not as radical as it sounds. What Casey and Savastinuk describe is not actually constant change, but an ongoing process of evaluation of library services with a willingness to make changes as needed.¹⁸

¶7 The definitions proposed by Casey and Savastinuk in the article and book cited above seem reasonably coherent and understandable, but they are not the only librarians trying to define it. Some commentators think Library 2.0 is about the technology, and some think it is about people. Some say that it is a revolution in the ways we think about and provide library services. Others insist that it is nothing new, that librarians have always evolved to meet the changing needs of library users and adopted new technology to support library services.¹⁹

11. See Michael Casey, *Library 2.0, Beta*, LibraryCrunch, http://www.librarycrunch.com/2005/10/library_20_beta.html (last visited Oct. 11, 2005).

12. *Id.*

13. Michael E. Casey & Laura C. Savastinuk, *Library 2.0: Service for the Next-Generation Library*, LIBR. J., Sept. 1, 2006, at 40.

14. MICHAEL E. CASEY & LAURA C. SAVASTINUK, *LIBRARY 2.0: A GUIDE TO PARTICIPATORY LIBRARY SERVICE* (2007).

15. Casey & Savastinuk, *supra* note 13, at 40.

16. *See id.*

17. CASEY & SAVASTINUK, *supra* note 14, at 5.

18. *See id.* at 12–14.

19. *See, e.g.*, Walt Crawford, *Library 2.0 and “Library 2.0”*, CITES & INSIGHTS, Midwinter 2006, at 1, 3, <http://citesandinsights.info/civ6i2.pdf>.

¶8 Like Walt Crawford, I found that “the more I read about Library 2.0 the more confused I got”²⁰ In late 2005, Mr. Crawford undertook to write a short article synthesizing the Library 2.0 discussion.²¹ He ended up with a thirty-two-page special issue of *Cites & Insights*, including prologue and epilogue, sixty-two views and seven definitions, quotations from at least thirty-six librarian bloggers, and his own commentary.²² It presents a broad overview of a variety of viewpoints and provides a good review of the issues that should be considered in any evaluation of library services. I recommend that you read it in its entirety.

¶9 Crawford distinguishes between Library 2.0 ideas and the label “Library 2.0.”²³ While most of the “concepts behind Library 2.0 are constructive, building on today’s best and improving for the future,”²⁴ the “Library 2.0” hyperbole frequently appears to be confrontational, “deriding today’s libraries as irrelevant and today’s librarians as rigid and unchanging,”²⁵ and it gets in the way of open conversations on how we can improve our libraries.²⁶

¶10 Another problem with the label is that the “2.0” is reminiscent of numbered software versions, suggesting a major change.²⁷ However, Casey and Savastinuk, and most other writers who approach Library 2.0 as a process, recommend incremental changes so that change is “evolutionary, not revolutionary.”²⁸ This approach is consistent with the Web 2.0 principle of “delivering software as a continually-updated service”²⁹ Perhaps because of these problems, librarians seem to be moving away from the label, referring instead to using Web 2.0 in libraries.³⁰

¶11 If we ignore the occasional negativity of the less diplomatic proponents of the “Library 2.0” movement and focus on the possibilities of Library 2.0 ideas, we can “find good uses for new technologies,” ways to improve our interactions with library users, and “new methods to deliver information”³¹ For the remainder of this article, I will use Library 2.0 to refer to ideas and tools, rather than to the movement.

20. *Id.* at 1.

21. *See id.* at 1, 6.

22. *See id.* at 1–32.

23. *Id.* at 1–2, 31–32.

24. *Id.* at 1.

25. *Id.* at 2.

26. *See id.* at 32.

27. *See* Greg R. Notess, *The Terrible Twos: Web 2.0, Library 2.0, and More*, ONLINE, May–June 2006, at 40, 40.

28. CASEY & SAVASTINUK, *supra* note 14, at 44.

29. O’Reilly, *supra* note 5. *See also* O’Reilly, *supra* note 1 (discussing the end of the software release cycle).

30. *See* Mary Ellen Bates, *Info Pro on the Edge*, ECONTENT, Dec. 2006, at 17, 17 (noting that, a year after the term was introduced, “some bloggers view Library 2.0 as *so* last week, or as merely a new name for what innovative libraries have been doing for years”).

31. Notess, *supra* note 27, at 42.

Library 2.0 and Law Libraries

Change with a Purpose

¶12 It is impossible to generalize about which Library 2.0 ideas and tools should be adopted in law libraries. Any implementation in your library should be a result of evaluation of library services in light of the library's mission, the needs of its users, and staffing and budget limitations.³² Think of Library 2.0 as a toolbox from which you choose the tool that will help you meet your users' needs. No matter how exciting the technology is, it is only "a tool, never a reason" for change.³³ What works for another library will not necessarily work for yours.³⁴

What Can/Should You Stop Doing?

¶13 One of the reasons frequently given for adopting Library 2.0 ideas and tools is that they will enable the library to do "more with the same or fewer resources."³⁵ But the question of where the time and other resources will come from is rarely addressed.³⁶ Although some technologies can make us more efficient, adding a library service or resource may mean that something else will have to be cut.³⁷ Carl Yirka, Director of the law library at Vermont Law School, addressed this issue by asking his faculty what the library can stop doing in order to be able to do something else.³⁸ He shared his reasons and a list of faculty suggestions in an e-mail to the law library directors' list³⁹ and spoke with Jim Milles on a Check This Out! podcast.⁴⁰ Yirka doesn't use the term Library 2.0, but his approach surely falls within its definition.

Some Web 2.0 Tools

¶14 The following are some examples of Library 2.0 and Web 2.0 tools that libraries are using to extend or improve library services.

¶15 **Blogs** are Web sites with certain characteristics that make them ideal for posting content that will be updated frequently: new information appears at the top of the page, previous items are available via archives, and entries can be assigned to categories. Blogs are created using blogging software, which is user-friendly

32. See CASEY & SAVASTINUK, *supra* note 14, at 21–36.

33. Rachel Singer Gordon, *What Will You Do Today?*, LIBR. J., Oct. 15, 2006, at 43, 43.

34. See CASEY & SAVASTINUK, *supra* note 14, at 49–50.

35. *Id.* at 77.

36. But see Margaret Maes Axtmann, *Academic Law Libraries 2.0*, AALL SPECTRUM, July 2006, at 14, 14–16, for a discussion of the decisions academic law libraries must make to "respond to technological developments and changes in the social aspects of information." *Id.* at 14.

37. See CASEY & SAVASTINUK, *supra* note 14, at 21–22.

38. E-mail from Carl Yirka, Dir., Julien & Virginia Cornell Library, Vermont Law School to lawlibdir listserv, May 31, 2007, available at http://cto.libsyn.com/index.php?post_id=224745#.

39. E-mail from Carl Yirka, Dir., Julien & Virginia Cornell Library, Vermont Law School to lawlibdir listserv (June 1, 2007), http://cto.libsyn.com/index.php?post_id=224745#.

40. Jim Milles, The Yirka Question (June 12, 2007), http://cto.libsyn.com/index.php?post_id=224745#.

and simple to use. Blogs can supplement or replace print or e-mail newsletters, delivering information faster and avoiding e-mail-filter problems.⁴¹ They can also be used within the library to disseminate current awareness items or for knowledge management.⁴² For example, we use a password-protected blog to share details about major research projects among reference librarians.

¶16 One of the defining characteristics of a blog is the comments function, which you can use to allow readers to add comments to entries. Unfortunately, spam is as much a problem in blog comments as it is in e-mail. If you allow comments, you should moderate or filter them to keep spam from rendering comments useless.

¶17 **Feeds** are Web files connected to blogs, news sites, and other frequently updated Web sites in order to distribute content, including text, images, sound, and video content. Blogging software automatically creates and updates feeds for blogs, so starting a blog is an easy way to create a feed. Individuals can subscribe to feeds with a feed reader like Bloglines (www.bloglines.com) or Google Reader (www.google.com/reader), which monitors the feeds for updates. The subscriber can then view the updates from all her subscriptions, because it is not necessary for the person to visit each site to see if there is anything new.

¶18 The library can also publish its blog feed on other Web pages using JavaScript or a free JavaScript Web tool.⁴³ I convert my feeds to FeedBurner (www.feedburner.com) feeds because FeedBurner has a number of tools for working with feeds, including one for republishing the feed on a Web page. FeedBurner also applies styles to its feeds, so that the feed page looks like a Web page, without all the angle-bracketed source code showing. But my favorite reason for using FeedBurner is the feature that allows us to offer an e-mail subscription option. Slightly less than half of the subscribers to the Ross-Blakley Law Library Blog⁴⁴ choose this option.

¶19 **Wikis** are Web sites on which several authors can collaborate to share information or compose documents. Wiki software is simple to use and user-friendly. Wikis can be excellent tools for knowledge management or other types of information sharing within the library, within the law firm, or for collaboration with clients.⁴⁵ For example, we use a wiki as a quick-reference resource.

¶20 **Instant messaging (IM)** is real-time conversation using text, and it usually requires software to be downloaded to both parties' computers.⁴⁶ **Chat** is similar,

41. See Lisa Keller, *I Blog. We Wiki. Web 2.0 and Grassroots KM*, PRAC. INNOVATIONS, July 2007, at 6, 7, available at <http://west.thomson.com/pdf/iii/PracticeInnovJuly07.pdf>.

42. *Id.*

43. See MEREDITH G. FARKAS, SOCIAL SOFTWARE IN LIBRARIES: BUILDING COLLABORATION, COMMUNICATION, AND COMMUNITY ONLINE 54 (2007).

44. Ross-Blakley Law Library Blog, <http://lawlibnews.blog.asu.edu> (last visited Oct. 18, 2007).

45. See Keller, *supra* note 40, at 6–7.

46. See, e.g., PHIL BRADLEY, HOW TO USE WEB 2.0 IN YOUR LIBRARY 134 (2007).

but users go to a specific Web page to initiate a conversation.⁴⁷ The most common use of IM and chat in libraries is for virtual reference service.⁴⁸

¶21 **Device-independent Web sites** can be viewed and navigated with cell phones, PDAs, and other Internet-enabled handheld devices.⁴⁹ How to make your Web site device-independent is beyond the scope of this article, but the first step is to test it.⁵⁰ If you don't have an Internet-enabled cell phone or device, you can get a rough idea of how your site will look on a mobile-device screen at the Opera Mini Simulator.⁵¹

¶22 The list of Web 2.0 tools that librarians are using to improve or extend library services goes on and on, but those covered here are good starting points. If you would like a more complete list of the tools and a more in-depth discussion on how libraries are using the tools, I recommend *Social Software in Libraries: Building Collaboration, Communication, and Community Online*.⁵²

Additional Resources

¶23 For more ideas on using Library 2.0 and Web 2.0 in your law library, the following sources may be useful:

- Web 2.0 and Libraries⁵³ and Web 2.0 and Libraries, Part 2,⁵⁴
- A Librarian's Guide to Creating 2.0 Subject Guides,⁵⁵
- Does Web 2.0 Point Us Toward Law 2.0?;⁵⁶
- Learning 2.0 (plcmlearning.blogspot.com);
- Public Library Geeks Take Web 2.0 to the Stacks;⁵⁷
- Under the Hood of Web 2.0: The Top Ten Programming Concepts for Librarians to Understand;⁵⁸
- Library Success: A Best Practices Wiki (www.libsuccess.org);

47. See *id.* at 142.

48. See *id.* at 137.

49. See FARKAS, *supra* note 42, at 168–69.

50. See Virginia DeBolt, *Make Your Site Mobile Friendly*, VITAMIN, May 14, 2007, <http://www.thinkvitamin.com/features/css/make-your-site-mobile-friendly>.

51. Opera Mini Simulator, <http://demo.opera-mini.net/fourzerobeta> (last visited Oct. 18, 2007).

52. FARKAS, *supra* note 42.

53. Michael Stephens, *Web 2.0 & Libraries: Best Practices for Social Software*, LIBR. TECH. REP., July–Aug. 2006.

54. Michael Stephens, *Web 2.0 & Libraries, Part 2: Trends & Technologies*, LIBR. TECH. REP., Sept.–Oct. 2007.

55. Ellyssa Kroski, *A Librarian's Guide to Creating 2.0 Subject Guides*, iLibrarian, <http://oedb.org/blogs/ilibrarian/2007/a-librarians-guide-to-creating-20-subject-guides> (last visited Oct. 1, 2007).

56. *Does Web 2.0 Point Us Toward Law 2.0? A Roundtable Discussion*, LAW PRAC. TODAY, Jan. 2006, <http://www.abanet.org/lpm/lpt/articles/tch01061.html>.

57. Beverly Hanly, *Public Library Geeks Take Web 2.0 to the Stacks*, WIRED NEWS, Mar. 29, 2007, http://www.wired.com/culture/education/news/2007/03/learning2_0.

58. Ryan Deschamps, *Under the Hood of Web 2.0: The Top Ten Programming Concepts for Librarians to Understand*, The Other Librarian, <http://otherlibrarian.wordpress.com/2007/09/06/under-the-hood-of-web-20-the-top-ten-programming-concepts-for-librarians-to-understand> (last visited Sept. 6, 2007).

- Practice Innovations;⁵⁹
- LLRX.com, especially the columns listed as Librarian Resources;⁶⁰
- programs at AALL and other conferences;⁶¹
- librarian blogs listed in Library 2.0 and “Library 2.0”;⁶²
- library and information periodicals cited in the footnotes of this article.

¶24 I was not able to review all the new books that I wanted to include in this article. In addition to the books I have cited above, the following books also look promising:

- Balanced Libraries: Thoughts on Continuity and Change;⁶³
 Library 2.0 and Beyond: Innovative Technologies and Tomorrow's User.⁶⁴

Conclusion

¶25 Library 2.0 is the application of Web 2.0 technologies *and* ideas to library services. Although no single definition has emerged, the focus of most definitions of Library 2.0 is on ideas for improving library services to better serve current users and to reach out to potential library users.⁶⁵ Library 2.0 will look different for different libraries. Each library must evaluate the appropriateness of possible Web 2.0 applications in light of the needs of its users.

¶26 Library 2.0 will continue to develop as library users' needs and expectations continue to change, and the definition of Library 2.0 will remain a “moving target.”⁶⁶ I wrote this column almost six months before it will appear in *Law Library Journal*, but I hope that it will give you some background for exploring Library 2.0 on your own, now and in the future.

59. West, Practice Innovations, <http://west.thomson.com/newsletters/practiceinnovations> (last visited Oct. 18, 2007).

60. LLRX.com, Librarian Resources, <http://www.llrx.com/librarian-resources.htm> (last visited Oct. 18, 2007).

61. *E.g.*, Bringing the Library to the User: The Theory, program presented at the 100th Annual Meeting of the American Association of Law Libraries, New Orleans (July 15, 2007) (audio CD available from Mobiltape Co.); Bringing the Library to the User: The Practice, program presented at the 100th Annual Meeting of the American Association of Law Libraries, New Orleans (July 15, 2007) (audio CD available from Mobiltape Co.); Public Services in the 21st Century: Beyond Traditional Reference Service, program presented at the 100th Annual Meeting of the American Association of Law Libraries, New Orleans (July 15, 2007) (audio CD available from Mobiltape Co.); It's No Mirage: Providing an Oasis for Supporting Learning, Research & Scholarship in the 2.0 Environment, program presented at CALIcon07, Las Vegas (June 20, 2007) (wiki presentation available at <http://wiki.cali.org/calicon07/index.php?n=Sessions.299>); Web 2.0 Applications in Education Today, program presented at CALIcon07, Las Vegas (June 19, 2007) (wiki presentation available at <http://wiki.cali.org/calicon07/index.php?n=Sessions.305>).

62. Crawford, *supra* note 19, at 7–31.

63. WALT CRAWFORD, BALANCED LIBRARIES: THOUGHTS ON CONTINUITY AND CHANGE (2007).

64. LIBRARY 2.0 AND BEYOND: INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGIES AND TOMORROW'S USER (Nancy Courtney ed., 2007).

65. See CASEY & SAVASTINUK, *supra* note 14, at 5.

66. Terence K. Huwe, *Surfing the Library 2.0 Wave*, COMPUTERS IN LIBR., Jan. 2007, at 36, 38.