

A Business Case for Web 2.0

Renewal of Library Services

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Proposal

For my final project, I propose that I prepare a Web 2.0 business case for library board approval of a large urban library. It will recommend the implementation of web 2.0 tools to support existing and future library services and meet specific objectives set out by the board.

The proposal will consider the costs, benefits, and limitations of implementing web 2.0 tools in meeting the requirements. It will also examine software and hardware requirements that will best suit library operations while meeting web 2.0 objectives.

As part of the high-level funding plan, it will consider potential cost savings where appropriate. A cursory examination of the timeframe for planning, testing, and rollout of the project will also be considered.

In summary, the proposal will address the what, who, when and how of implementing a number of web 2.0 tools to meet library objectives. It will include a cost-benefit analysis, timetable, and funding strategy.

Current Situation

Library

- the public library serves a population of 100,000 or more including the surrounding suburbs
- there are two branch offices

Assumptions

The proposal will be based on the following assumptions:

- the public library serves a population of 100,000 or more including the surrounding suburbs
- there are branch offices
- the existing IT infrastructure will be used but may need upgrading

Recent Survey Results

Findings

- usage of traditional services is down
- younger patrons are not using the library as their parents did at their age
- younger patrons find library services not up with the times
- most patrons and potential patrons do not know what the library has to offer

Library's View

- Overall patronage is down for the second year in a row

- Library Board wants to see trend reversed, warning that failure to do so could lead to reduced funding for the library in the future

Patrons View

- Communicate more with the community about what is going on in the library. Patrons complain that the monthly library newsletter is insufficient as it is often incomplete, inaccurate, late, or completely stops when staff become busy with other work or go on vacation.
- The library should be more transparent and responsive to suggestions and critiques
- Library should provide services similar to bookstores including online browsing, reviews, and tagging

Business Case

Objective

The following objectives have been established by the board:

1. to provide new services to their existing patrons
2. to attract new patrons
3. to improve existing services
4. to improve communication between the library and the community

To achieve these objectives, the library needs to renew itself to bring its communications and services in line with patron expectations. Failure to do so will only lead patrons to turn to bookstores and the Internet for current information, believing the library is an archive that hordes out of date books.

Patron Expectations

Patrons expect:

- The library will be a source of information that offers online help and advice to their reference and other Library needs.
- Resources will be available in electronic print and other formats.
- The library will communicate with the public in a variety of ways that encourage the public to respond with comments, critiques, and suggestions
- The library cannot assume that patrons will use the library if their comments are simply shelved

Proposed Solutions

In order to convince the public the library remains a valuable resource for research and enjoyment, the library should acknowledge that the Internet is the primary source of communication and interaction with our patrons and use Web 2.0 tools including Blogs, Wikis, RSS, and social bookmarking.

Web 2.0 tools are key to interaction when we see that students, young professionals, families, and retirees all use web 2.0.

Benefits of Web 2.0

Web 2.0 will:

- Add modern tools to achieve the library's communication and interaction objectives
- Provide an inexpensive solution that is easily implemented and maintained
- Allow for bi-directional communication the patrons expect
- Complement existing services
- Provide a means to providing new services at the library
- Be implemented in one fiscal year

Social Software Recommended

Blogs

A bog or web log is a communication and interaction tool that could allow the library to publish a variety of announcements about what is happening at the library.

Advantages

- A new way to provide human voice(s) to library announcements
- Encourages user feedback more than the one-way press release
- Increases transparency and accountability
- Informed patrons are more likely to be involved with, and give to, the library
- Could be seamlessly added to existing website

Disadvantages

- Blogs need a policy to deal with vandals
- Someone needs to maintain the site
- It will require some funding, however, maintenance is relatively inexpensive
- Not all patrons know about blogs, though this could be remedied by a publicity campaign

How blogs help the library achieve its objectives

- Easy to update
- Separate authors can make specific blogs
 - Possible authors include:
 - Library Director
 - Head of collections
 - Reference librarians
 - Technical services
 - Children's librarian
 - Library branch heads.
 - Volunteers
- Provides a way to provide accurate, timely information

- Reference and technical blogs can decrease patron anxiety about visiting the library
- An acquisitions blog can remind patrons that the library also has movies, music, as well as books in different languages, and large print as well as other adaptive formats
- Encourages patrons to participate by commenting on services and asking questions

Recommendation

The library should create a variety of blogs to increase communication with patrons. An about blogging and policy page should be created and be linked to the main blog page.

Wiki

A [Wiki](#) is a web tool using specific software collaborative tool that allows people to work together on a project. The software is called a wiki after the Hawaiian word wiki or fast.

Advantages

- Could serve as an inexpensive internal content management system, allowing library staff to collaborate across the library system.
- Provides a history of edits
- Easy to use

Disadvantages

- Public wiki is subject to vandalism
- Hard to create critical mass with public wikis unless serving a large population of a million or more
- Concern that wikis can be more time consuming to manage than blogs

How Wikis help the library achieve our objectives

- Serve as a whiteboard for ideas
- Can contain updated reference suggestions
- Update “what’s new”
- Involve patrons with the library staff
- Provide library help – easy to update for non- tech staff

Recommendation

Wikis may not be the best idea for our library, though we may want to run a pilot for internal use on a wiki-farm to minimize costs. To initiate a Wiki trial:

- Have users register with the library
- Use a system with an invite password that is changed every month
- Staff should start a number of articles to get the ball rolling

RSS

[RSS](#) is a web 2.0 tool that allows patrons to receive near real-time personalized information streams. Many patrons already use RSS and its bother format, [Atom](#), to receive personalized information including news, sports, weather, or comments from their favorite blog.

Advantages

- Libraries can create a number of tailored feeds for various patrons and other interest groups
- RSS can also be customized by the user
- These RSS feeds can be read by launching a single reader
- RSS and ATOM are integrated in modern browsers

Disadvantages

- No single format
- RSS 1 and RSS 2 are not compatible
- ATOM, another format, was created to supersede RSS 1.0 and 2.0 but has not done so. The library will have to support these formats to ensure patrons can use our RSS service.
- RSS does not make it easy to track the number of people subscribed to a particular feed. his could be problematic as the library is always trying to prove its value to city council

How RSS helps the library achieve its interaction goals

Customizable RSS feeds can be used to provide links to:

- Blogs
- OPAC
- Social bookmarks
- Wikis
- Patrons will now see and read updates.
- Less intrusive or time consuming for Library, patrons

Recommendation

The Library should create RSS/ Atom feeds to provide accurate, timely information for our patrons and to ensure they are useable by most patrons.

Social Bookmarking

Social bookmarking is when groups of users “tag” resources using a common tool such as del.ic.ious, the pre-eminent social bookmarking tool. As Joshua Potter wrote in [The Del.icio.us Lesson](#) , social bookmarking using tags creates a folksonomy based on words that have meaning to the people using the tool.

Advantages

- Great way to provide a richer experience for patrons; can be combined with RSS to provide reading lists that automatically update
- May teach users about search terms and indirectly the LCSH; Or, may simply let them create subject headings that make sense to them.
- Library thing for Libraries
 - Already created tool – costs about \$200 a year- rather inexpensive
 - Access to existing folksonomy, reviews, recommendations

Disadvantages

- folksonomies are not as precise as subject headings
- No defined terms
- Sometimes descriptive tags make little sense to outsiders or those unfamiliar with the concept
- The use of folksonomies and reviews in library thing may confuse some patrons who mistake book suggestions as ads.

How Social Bookmarking helps the library achieve its objectives?

- Helps us provide services to users that are similar to bookstores
- Provides assistance for patrons and librarians performing research
- Helps patrons answer the question “What should I read next”

Recommendation

I recommend that the library implement [LibraryThing for libraries](#) as an uncomplicated and inexpensive way to provide the benefits of social bookmaking to the library. LibraryThing also allows users to have access to similar services in the library as on the website of a major bookstore.

IT infrastructure Requirements

Current systems

Server

Currently have Windows XP Server edition

Web and Network

Currently the library has Primus’s Standard web hosting service with

- 150 Gbit per month throughput,
- 2 GB web space
- Security suite, backup
- 99.9 % uptime guarantee

System Requirements

Compliance & Testing

- All facets of the web 2.0 project should be tested on various operating systems and browsers to ensure patrons can access and use the website.
 - OS to test for compatibility include:
 - Windows XP / Vista
 - Mac X
 - Linux
 - Browsers to test for compatibility include:
 - Internet Explorer
 - Firefox
 - Safari
 - Opera
 - RSS feeds to test for compatibility include:
 - RSS
 - Atom
- All facets of the web 2.0 project should also be compliant with the standards established by the [World Wide Web Consortium](#) (W3C)
- Use the library's domain
- Support RSS and Atom
- Support tagging
- Support multiple authors
- Support comments

Implementation

Blog & Web Hosting

After comparing the library's needs with an article by Susannah Gardner [Time to check: Are you using the right blogging tool?](#) and the accompanying [Blog software comparison chart](#), I believe [TypePad](#), a blog development tool and service, will allow the library to create the professionally looking and featured blog it needs to communicate effectively with patrons.

By signing up for a [premium](#) plan, the library will be able to have TypePad seamlessly host our blog on their server while appearing that it is on ours. The yearly cost of \$300 is a fraction of what it would cost to purchase and maintain our own server.

Wiki Software

For the Library's wiki pilot project, the library will:

- Use of a wiki farm to keep costs down
- The library will run the pilot for a year
- An advantage of a wiki farm is that they are OS and browser independent

Social Bookmarking

The Library should use [Library thing for Libraries](#) as it will provide the features the library needs to provide bookmarking and folksonomy services at our library. Library Thing for Libraries costs about \$1000 per year. Examples include the [Blais Catalog - The Libraries of The Claremont Colleges](#) and the [Danbury Library Catalog](#)

Network Requirements

The following upgrades will be required:

- Upgrade to Primus' Intermediate plan
- 160 Gbit per month throughput.
- 3 GB webspace
- Only an additional \$120 per annum

Costs

Skills needed	FTE	Staff/Contractor	Annual Cost	Time
Project Lead	0.50	Contract	\$20,000	6 months
Web Upkeep	0.00	Existing contract	-	12 months
Library Thing Integration	0.14	Contract	\$8,000	2 months
Library Thing Upkeep	0.04	Staff	-	0.5 month
Training	0.25	Contract	\$16,000	4 months
Communications	0.08	Staff	-	1 month
Total	1.01		\$44,000	

Hardware and Software Required	Annual Cost
TypePad premium	\$300
Wiki software	FREE
RSS software	FREE
Web space	\$120
Library Thing	\$1,000
Total	\$1,420

Schedule

Project part	Length	From	To
Planning	2 months	August 2008	September 2008
Implementation	2 months	October 2008	November 2008
Change management	4 months	September 2008	January 2009
Training	1 month	December 2008	December 2008
Publicity	7 months	August 2008	February 2009
Rollout	-	January 2009	

Other Considerations

General

- Create and set a publishing schedule
 - Ensures Web 2.0 activities are a regular part of staff's job.
 - Management should encourage staff to block time off for it just like they would reference work.
 - Prevents Web 2.0 from becoming a project to be done "later" – "later" never arrives.

Policy implications

The Library needs to update its privacy and security policies so they work in tandem with the web 2.0 tools, ensuring security while encouraging feedback.

A non-exhaustive sample of policy points to consider includes:

- disclaimers that comments left by patrons do not reflect the opinion of the library
- Pointless, disruptive comments are taken down
- Well written but critical comments will stay
- The library will create a legal waiver form for people to sign for any photos of people taken at an event before they are published online
 - This policy will include the stipulation that a legal guardian will sign for any children

- What level of ownership do patrons and the library have over content created on the wiki and Library Thing? The library wants to encourage users to add information but wants reasonable control.
- Would a variation of a creative commons license be appropriate?
 - Under this schema, authors of the content grant the library the right to edit and update content so long as the library notes the user(s) as the originator of the content.

Communications & Marketing Strategy

Build it and they may not come. So to be successful, the library needs to market its web 2.0 tools. Ideas include:

- Stories in local newspapers
- Free Radio and television spots (what's new in the community)
- Announcements on the library's main page
- Posters with the message "Web 2.0 is coming to the library"
- Trained staff can have buttons "Web 2.0 ready"
- A kick-off party
 - Door prizes for patrons that sign up and create content using web 2.0 tools
 - Staff educates and demonstrates new website to patrons highlighting what patrons can now do

The library should begin marketing the project a few months in advance and build up to the kick-off party.

Change Management

Staff may dislike change brought on by web 2.0 because:

- Fear of technology (seen as foreign to some who grew up in the days of card catalogs)
- Fear new web 2.0 will disrupt orderly library
- Fear everyone will have to learn how to program
- Fear lack of support
- It is change!

How to counter fear:

- Need for team building/information/training sessions, "we are all in this together"
- Training provided either on site or via collages/universities for staff interested as the library supports professional growth
- Remind staff that they are librarians. If they weren't interested in learning, they wouldn't be librarians
- E-mail, OPAC, and other changes have happened; this is just the latest one

Summary

The recommendations in this business case address the concerns stemming from the recent survey and the objectives set out by the Library Board. Four Web 2.0 tools (blogs, wiki, RSS, and social bookmarking) are recommended. Implementation of these tools should be completed over one fiscal year and will cost approximately \$45,420 dollars. Library staff will work with consultants to design, implement, and manage the project.

Having implemented these four Web 2.0 tools, the library will:

1. Be able to communicate more effectively with the community and make them aware of what is going on in the library
2. Be more transparent and able to respond to suggestions and critiques
3. Provide reviews, recommendations, and other services similar to book stores
4. Provide more information to aid patrons in research

This project represents a major challenge for the library but is necessary if the library is to renew itself to be able to respond to patron expectations.