Dynamic Library Organization: (Socializing with) Participatory Knowledge Sharing Tools

Usha Mujoo Munshi   ***Sanjay Garg***

Abstract

The present paper endeavours to focus on the current structure of Library as a dynamic organization that transcended from the earlier unit culture to the present global culture. This transitional transformation is attributed to the splendid changes being brought about by the information and communication technology to the domain of the information management and dissemination. Further, the true culture of libraries as a social and participatory place has been buttressed in the electronic environment by the developments in the web technologies and tools. The paper in an attempt to showcase the application of web 2.0 tools as add-on technology for rendering participatory knowledge services by the libraries, focuses on some of these tools with special reference to virtual reference services. While concluding it is pointed out that the profession in general, claims a long history of effectively recognizing user's needs and then applying that user knowledge towards service delivery schema which completely address those needs.

Keywords: Social Networking, Knowledge Sharing, Web 2.0

1. Introduction

The idea of capturing, storing and sharing of knowledge so as to learn and disseminate information from the past and from elsewhere - overcoming the boundaries which is posed by space and time is far from being a new one in the recent years, still then the question arises what is a dynamic library organization

in the new perspective as far the Libraries and Information institutions are concerned.

The concept of Dynamic Library organization is new and is being implemented through out the world, but to understand the concept we have to traverse through the of Five Laws of the Library Science propounded by Dr. S. R. Ranganathan

The first law say **"Books Are For Use"** or in other words Information is for use, but the irony is so far today the websites are being designed only to be seen and admired which makes little sense so far as this law is concerned. Librarians and Libraries ought to create websites in such a way so that the people could interact, play around and do things and have fun.

The second law says "Every Books its reader". To this end, with regard to IT every information its reader. Hence each and every website needs to be designed in such a way, incorporating all related to web 2.0 technologies such us IM, Blogs, RSS Feed which will make the information readable. There are Libraries that have incorporated & made use of Web 2.0 technology into its web based Library system, though the length and breadth of such application do vary.

"Every reader its books" in today's context would infer - "Each piece of content its User" and "Each user his/her content". It is very important that the content in the websites should be according to the needs of the user and one needs to make sure that the content reaches its destination i,e; to the specified user segment, and also it is very important that the website is not clattered with unnecessary information which is of no or little use to a particular set of users.

The fourth law "Save the Time of the User", in context of websites, a few of the things that should be kept in mind to make an endeavour to satisfy this law. Firstly, the website should be designed in such a way which ensures that less time of the user is consumed while it uploads on a web browser and the website handles (exit points/switches) should be placed in such a way that the user doesn't get stuck at anyone of the visited pages. Secondly there should be enough options available such as Keyword search, Advance Search panes so that the user gets the right material at the right time, and for this it is quiet imperative to structure data which can be done using the right mix of data and backend application such as ASP, PHP, Joomla, Drupal and the like.

The fifth and the final law of Dr. Ranganathan says "Library is a growing organism". In other words if we say in the information science context Information is a growing organism, rightly so, as the websites are constantly increasing, as well as the user has grown many fold. For a website, it is quiet important that it should be updated, evaluated regularly so that more and more and new information is added. Thirdly, we need to always brush up our own skills which would definitely help in disseminating the information in a more meaningful manner.

The five laws with respect to the present day era of information centric society portrays a reflective learning cycle wherein we are moving towards a dynamic library organization which is endeavoring to socialize with its current and prospective users through the participatory knowledge sharing tools, Now here again, one ponders over the question as to What is Participatory Knowledge Sharing Tools and how it can be better utilized in Libraries and Information Centres.

2. Participatory Knowledge Sharing

In a participatory knowledge sharing one tends to share information with others through the use of Web/Network for its better utilization, the more the streamlined and structured information is shared among the users, the more it gets refined and is distributed effectively.

Participatory Knowledge sharing is basically associated with the Web 2.0 technology which invariably relates to interoperability, user centered design and collaboration on the World Wide Web. In other words, Web 2.0 and beyond is the focal point for participatory knowledge sharing which socializes beyond countries and continents. According to Wikipedia technically a Web 2.0 enabled site allow users to interact with each other in a social dialogue as creators of user-generated content in a virtual community In the layman's parlance the term Web 2.0 was largely championed by bloggers, by technology journalists, and the like. In the 2006 Time Magazine person of the year, in that issue of cover story Lev Grossman says :

"It's a story about community and collaboration as a scale never seen before, it's about the cosmic compendium of knowledge Wikipedia and the million-channel people's network YouTube and

online metropolis MySpace. It's about the many wresting power from the few and helped one another for nothing and how that will not only change the world but also change the way the world changes".

That takes us to a new line of action to focus on some of the constituent components of the web that have great relevance for libraries with special reference to rendering, participatory library services.

3. What All Are There in Web 2.0 for Knowledge Sharing?

The concept of Web 2.0 got started or was coined in the year 2003 when O'Reilly Media and MediaLive hosted its first conference where John Batellie and Tim O'Reilly outlined their definition of "Web as Platform" where software applications are built upon the web as opposed to the use of the desktop. They argued that the activities of users generating content (in the form of ideas, text, videos or pictures could be harnessed to create value. A lot of technologies are being used for the use of Web 2.0 which are client-side/web browser are Asynchronous JavaScript and XML (Ajax), Adobe Flash and the Adobe Flex framework and JavaScript/Ajax Frameworks such as YUL Library, Dojo Toolkit, MooTools, JQuery and Prototype JavaScript Framework. More recently new technologies such as PHP, Ruby, Perl, Python and JSP are used by developers to output data dynamically using information from files and databases.

3.1 Components of Participatory Knowledge Sharing

Participatory knowledge sharing which uses web 2.0 tools for its websites should have all the features

and techniques which is termed as SLATES (Search, Links, Authoring, Tags, Extensions, Signals) which was coined by Andrew Mcafee. SLATES refers to following broadly
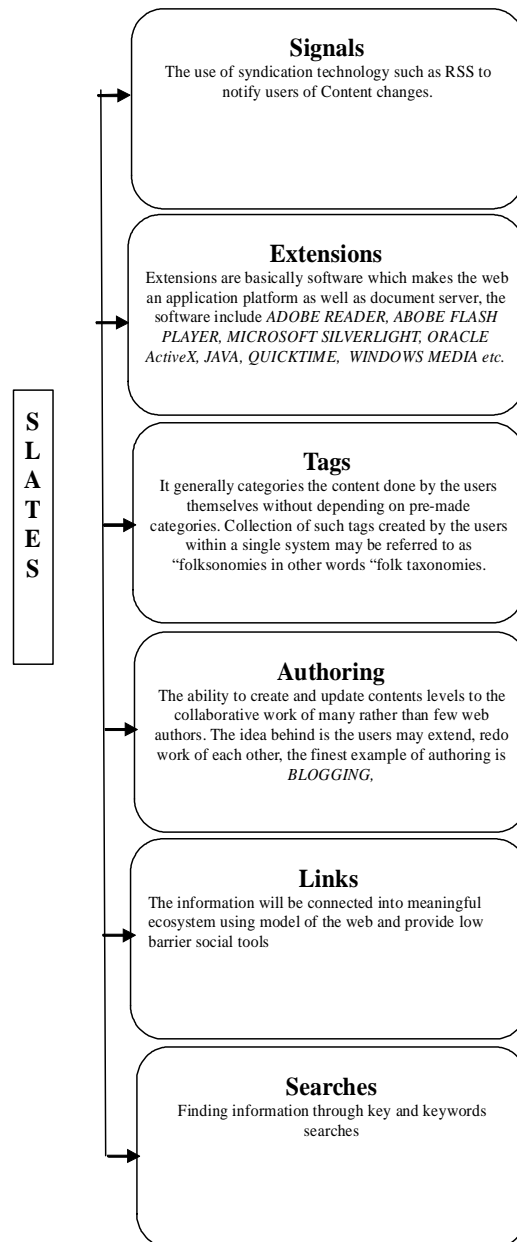

Figure1: SLATES Schema

3.2 Use of Web 2.0 Technology in Libraries/ Information Centres

The global nature of web based services means that libraries can reach a vast audience, serving more in the virtual sphere than would be possible at a physical location. For example, by establishing a presence of possible media websites, libraries can reach beyond the walled garden to interact with users in online spaces that they are visiting rather than passively waiting for users to seek us out. A strong web presence including representations on social media sites, improves awareness of library services and contributes to a progressive and modern image which may in turn lead to increased physical visits.

One of the biggest challenges for the libraries is choosing the right kind of services because there are a number of providers offering either the same or any similar services, so it can be at times confusing between and among the providers. There are some suggested approaches as that can be adopted while choosing a provider

❖ Determine the most popular Web 2.0 services in general terms

❖ Liaise with other library authorities to the identify the services that have been adopted and the associated pros and cons

❖ Ask yourself: what do you want to achieve, who would you like to target, which user group will be the most interested in the information you are sharing?

❖ Experiment with Web 2.0 services to find out what works best for your services.

A potentially challenging aspect of working with the Web 2.0 lies in drawing together the different outputs from different services ranging, from the text of blog posts and tweets to the videos images on YouTube and Flickr. There are a number of Web 2.0 tools which a librarian can use for its institute in terms of its more meaningful virtual presence and information dissemination in an participatory mode . For instance Blogs, RSS Feeds, WIKIS and the like. Let us see how these best fit into the dynamic library environment.

3.2.1   Blog

A blog or weblog is an online journal or website on which articles are

Posted and displayed in chronological order. The libraries should create blogs in various subjects areas. They should create blogs for announcing new developments and events taking place in the organization, subject resources, book reviews, library news, discussion groups etc. Many Libraries are using the blogs as a tool for their library. Examples include : : Central Library, IIT Kharagpur (http://www.library.iitkgp.ernet.in/library/blogindex.htm); Library & Documentation Division, IGNOU;

(http://libraryservicesignou.blogspot.com), etc.

3.2.2   RSS Feeds and Newsreaders

RSS is a technology that enables publishers to syndicate news and other contents on the web. Libraries are keeping up to date by subscribing to news & information sources via RSS Feeds. Many libraries in India are using RSS Feed application such as Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), New Delhi (http://www.iipalibrary.in/iipa/home.php#) , etc.

3.2.3   WIKIS

Wiki technology provides an area of effortless collaboration and knowledge sharing among a community of users without any programming knowledge. Its features include adding a new page, editing a existing page, searching, comments, sharing files and attachments, revising and making comparisons. For instance, Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) Library is using the WIKIS on its Library website to showcase the resources that are added by its potential trainees of important courses, so that each one of the participant know what exactly others are doing & have done (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Indian_Institute_of_Public_Administration .) , besides chaneelisin other information in a participatory mode.

3.2.4   Social Bookmarking

It is a very simple web 2.0 tool which allows the users to bookmark its favourite websites, articles, blog posts, podocast, images and web-based materials for future reference, the finest examples of social bookmarking are Delicious bookmarks (http://del.icio.us). Delicious formerly del.icio.us. is a social bookmarking web service for storing, sharing, and discovering web bookmarks. The site was founded by Joshua Schachter in the year 2003

3.2.5   Photosharing

Today sharing of photos online is becoming an instant hit among the users. The users are uploading, rating reviewing, annotating, searching, browsing, tagging, & creating a wealth of personal, cultural & historical digital image collections. Some of the finest examples includes: Flicker (www.flicker.com);Photobucket (www.photobucket.com0;Picazza (www.picazza.com).

Many a times libraries are using these platforms in reaching the audience. For instance IIPA Library used Piccaso to upload the photogallery of the special events for its user's consumption. (https://picasaweb.google.com/ 118153811525870332284/WorkshopPhotoGellery)

3.2.6   Social Cataloguing

This is way of cataloguing your "Library" (collection) of books, videos, music which includes CD, DVD or even game collection and share them among users. There are a number of social cataloguing websites such as Flickr (http:// www.flickr.com) for Photos, Flixster (http:// www.flixster.com) for Digital Movies, Finetune (http://www.finetune.com) for Music, Library Thing (http://www.librarythings.com) for Books.

3.2.7   Video Sharing

Video sharing enables the users to share, rate, comment watch & gather around video content free of charge without any technical expertise. Amateur filmmakers, Karaoke hopefuls & even talented pets have all been given a space to display their work. YouTube (http://www.youtube.com). Ibibo (http:// www.ibibo.com) are the finest examples of video sharing websites. In library environment these sharing tools are playing an important role in information dissemination. For instance, IIPA (http://iipalibrary.in/iipa/gal2.php) displays some of its lectures (through YouTube) using web 2.0 technologies. Several libraries around the world are using YouTube for information dissemination.

3.2.8 Instant Messaging (IM's)

Instant Messaging is a form of direct real time text messaging chatting communication in a push mode between users and devices along with shared devices. The user's text is conveyed over a network such as internet. More advanced software clients also allow enhanced modes of communication such as live voice or video calling and inclusion of links to media. Google (GTALK), Yahoo, Facebook, Skype, Meebo are the examples of Instant Messaging Websites. At IIPA Library, the instant communication tool is being used to communicate with the users using IM web participatory tool (meebo) (http://www.iipalibrary.in/iipa/home.php)

3.2.9 Virtual Reference Services

Librarians can take advantage of these communications tools also. No longer must virtual reference systems be expensive. With today's real time communication tools, a Librarian can establish a virtual reference service with relatively little expenses or no technical expertise. There are certain virtual reference applications which have more bells and whistles than others, they all based on the real time exchange of typed text. Two types which librarians can use to establish virtual reference service with little cost or technical skills are: Instant Messaging and embedded chat. This form of reference work expands reference services from the physical reference desk to a virtual reference work where the patron could be writing from home, work or a variety of other locations. The concept is new in India and there are various forms of "Virtual Reference Services" such as Email, Webforms, Chat using commercial applications, Chat using instant messaging and the like.

3.2.10 Social Networking Websites

Social media is becoming more and more a must for libraries and many libraries are finding that when used properly, it can be a great tool to save money and promote library services and collections, some of the social media or simply social networking websites are – Mobile Application, QR Codes, Google Applications, Twitter. The IIPA library can be followed on twitter and facebook at(IIPA - http://twitter.com/IIPA_Library), Facebook (IIPA - http://www.facebook.com/pages/IIPA_Library/158550520849680).

4. Concusion

It is certain that the increasing presence of web based information sources and enhanced remote access to these products will demand that libraries respond with services that are fashioned to meet the needs of the emerging clientele. Fortunately reference librarian, as does the profession in general, claims a long history of effectively recognizing users needs, and then applying that user knowledge towards service delivery schema which competently address those needs.

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Ahout Authors

Dr. Usha Mujoo Munshi, Indian Institute of Public Administration, I.P Estate, New Delhi

Mr. Sanjay Garg, Freelancer (Institutional Information Disseminator), New Delhi