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# 'Twitter ye not?'

## 23 Things that helped Warwick University Library staff to develop their Web 2.0 skills



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Warwick University Library recently ran a '23 Things' programme for library staff to help them develop their skills and understanding around Web 2.0 technologies<sup>1</sup>. This approach, first developed by Charlotte Mecklenburg Library<sup>2</sup> and subsequently run in many libraries, breaks the sometimes daunting world of social networking applications into bite-sized chunks (or Things) that are easier to manage and absorb. Some of the Things are 'doing' Things – using tools we have all heard of and many have never dared touch – whilst other Things are 'reflecting' Things, using blogging to capture personal observations on new technologies tried and new skills developed.

In the Warwick programme 'Thing 23' required staff from across the library, at different levels and with different experiences of Web 2.0, to reflect on their experience of the programme as a whole. This article captures together some of those reflections. One of us (Antony) was sponsor of the programme, a Digital Adventurer who has travelled a distance to embrace new Web 2.0 tools. The other (Emma) was the programme organiser, a Digital Native who regularly blogs, tweets and collaborates online. Both of us got a lot out of the 23 Things Warwick programme.

### WEB 1.0+

As with the rest of the higher education sector, we really started to become aware of the Web 2.0

concept around 2006<sup>3</sup> but we didn't spot its real potential for service development at Warwick until the following year. In September 2007 we ran a training afternoon for library staff on some Web 2.0 tools and in November several of us ventured down to the Institute of Minerals and Mining in London to attend a sharing of good practice day on blogging and other activities, from Paul Williams and other enthusiasts<sup>4</sup>. In December of that year the library was visited by colleagues from McMaster University, where Jeff Trzeciak had led a programme of staff development for his entire workforce on Web 2.0 developments<sup>5</sup>.

At the time it seemed that some tools had mileage for Warwick, whilst others were far more questionable. Facebook already seemed like a force to be reckoned with and was starting to prove somewhat popular with students. We were a bit afraid of appearing like a 'dad at a disco' by getting involved but – with the encouragement of the Students' Union education officer – we entered the dance floor. As it was untested, we decided not to spend too much time on it but put something up with content from our website, making it more accessible to students who prefer Web 2.0 to Web 1.0, to see what would happen. Our Facebook project was pretty low key ... but we and our (now) 2500 fans - have never looked back<sup>6</sup>.

Other tools looked as if they might have some potential for us (blogging, for example). Others looked a bit 'emperor's new clothes' (Second Life) so we did not rush into them.

I suppose you could say we had a pretty healthy attitude towards Web 2.0.

### HOW CAN WE LEARN ALL THESE THINGS?

But it is probably also fair to say that – for us as a library and more widely – it wasn't everyone who was getting involved with Web 2.0. One should perhaps not use the word 'geek' ... but it was often the geeks in the media who were promoting it. It was the experts, or at least the very interested, who seemed to be using Web 2.0. It didn't feel like it was for everyone ... but by its very nature it *should* be for everyone. As one of us blogged, quoting Frankie Howerd: 'Nay – it is not 'elitist networking'. Nay – it is not 'boffin networking'. Thrice nay – it is not 'geek networking'. It is *social* networking.'

So how could we get more staff more involved? Despite the big push at McMaster, we had seen little in the library and information science press

about training programmes for staff. Examples such as the Liverpool John Moores University approach looked fun but quite staff intensive<sup>7</sup>. So we were a bit stuck. Then 23 Things appeared.

Though it had been floating about in the ether for a time<sup>8</sup> and though he knew something about the programme, Antony first became fully aware of the 23 Things approach when he was offered articles for *SCONUL Focus* about the programme from Ciara McCaffrey at the University of Limerick and one Emma Cragg from Oxford<sup>9</sup>. When Emma came to work for Warwick it seemed obvious that we should use her expertise and get her to run the 23 Things programme for us too. Emma was in a specially good position to do this with the ability to draw on her experience from Oxford, and having watched how Cambridge had taken that and improved upon it. Her instruction was to make it even better for Warwick!

#### **A FEW THINGS TO THINK ABOUT FIRST**

Although we felt hugely positive about the 23 Things approach there were some practical issues that needed consideration. Access to computers for training (for some staff) and finding the time (for all staff) were the two biggest concerns to come out of conversations with colleagues.

PC access was addressed and following discussions with the library's senior management team we decided to run the programme in the spring term in the first instance, as this would be the 'quieter' term for some staff in terms of outward-facing activities. The Things would be less complex than in some previous iterations, with more demanding tools spread out over two Things. We would also factor in more 'free' weeks to provide (much needed) catch-up times. Lots of surgery or one-to-one support would be offered and peer support encouraged (again, much needed by some of us).

It was anticipated that staff should spend 1-2 hours per week on the programme, depending on their pre-knowledge and ability to pick up new techniques. Informed by these thoughts, the Warwick 23 Things programme looked like this:

Week	Theme	Things
1	Publishing on the web	1 Create a blog to record your progress with 23 Things
		2 Write your first blog post
		3 Register your blog to confirm your participation in the programme
2	Keeping up to date	4 Create an iGoogle start page
		5 Learn about RSS feeds
		6 Subscribe to the RSS feed of the 23 Things blog
3	Time management	7 Use Doodle to schedule a meeting with a fellow 23 Things participant
		8 Add Doodle to your iGoogle page
		9 Download Firefox and find out about what different browsers can offer
4	Networking	10 Create a Twitter account and find some people to follow
		11 Use Twitter to interact with other programme participants
		12 Investigate how libraries are using Facebook
5	Reflection week	13 Reflect on your progress with the programme so far
6	Getting organised	14 Sign up to Diigo and add some bookmarks
		15 Explore Zotero
		16 Learn about EndNote Web
7	Multi-media sharing	17 Create a Flickr account and upload some images
		18 Learn about using images licensed under Creative Commons
		19 Find and share library instruction videos on YouTube
8	Office 2.0	20 Add your blog to the UK Library blogs wiki
		21 Create a document using Google Docs and share it with another participant
		22 Find presentations about social media on SlideShare
9	Catch-up week	
10	Completion week	23 Blog about your experience of 23 Things and register your completion

Designing a programme on the shoulders of other giants was one thing. The next was to assemble a crack team of Web 2.0 enthusiasts and bloggers to develop and deliver the programme. This was reassuringly simple because of the existing expertise of some of our staff. This team (of Emma, Jess Humphreys, Jenny Delasalle, Samantha Johnson, Katherine Widdows, Rachel Care and Suzanne Atkins) was essential for success. Running a 23 Things programme alone would be a massive job, but with each individual in the team taking responsibility for one week's worth of Things it became surprisingly manageable.

Once preparations for the programme had been made there was really only one thing left to do - drum up some interest among library staff. Our programme was due to start at the beginning of the spring term in January 2011 so we sent out a couple of messages in the library's staff e-Bulletin before Christmas. Then, the 23 Things Team had the honour of kicking off proceedings at the staff open day (training event) on the first day back in the new year. We gave a short presentation<sup>10</sup> introducing the programme, followed by a workshop to get staff thinking about their use of social media and its place in libraries.

Despite the nerves anyone feels when they are about to launch anything like this, there was now no going back. All we could do was wait to see how many people registered. In the first week 25 participants registered, and we were happy with that, but by the time registration closed in week 5 we were up to 44 and we were over the moon.

#### **DELICIOUS**

The programme ran from January to March 2011 and the final Thing encouraged participants to reflect on the whole 23 Things.

So what did we get out of the programme? What did we learn?

From his blog, **Librarian Boy** observed:

- "For a start, it was good to have a structured course to complete. If that had not been the case I would never have forced myself to try out all the tools covered.
- The Things were mercifully small. I must admit, I skimmed and often did the minimum required to tick off a Thing, but they really were quite manageable. Splitting more difficult tasks into two or more Things was a good idea.

- The support from the 23 Things team was invaluable. I popped to a couple of the 'drop in' sessions that were timetabled but also found the guys useful if I phoned them or dropped in to their offices unannounced.
- It was reassuring that I had used quite a lot of the tools already. I use Flickr and YouTube (as an end-user rather than contributor) all the time. I had viewed SlideShare before and have had bursts of activity on Delicious. I knew I had an iGoogle account (set up years ago and seldom used) so it was good to re-discover that. I had also shared documents on a previous management course and arranged meetings with the tools we used. So I realised I wasn't such a Web 2.0 novice after all.
- I definitely learnt I should perhaps use some of these tools a bit more often! For me, the Things I enjoyed most were blogging and Tweeting. I need to try to keep up with both of these ... but I wouldn't wait too eagerly for each Tweet.
- I learnt lots of new stuff - actually setting an hour aside to specifically expand my horizons was great.
- I enjoyed some elements a lot. I enjoyed writing blog postings. I think Twitter is a good discipline ('communicate effectively in 140 characters') and a good excuse to save time ('I can't write much here...'). I also got a strange buzz out of editing something on Wikipedia and being part of that massive community. It was good to dig out my 'Julian Opie' self-portrait to appear as 'Librarian Boy' in his various media guises.
- It was good to be creative.
- The only down side was the time commitment and the fact that I could not devote as much time to the Things as I would have liked. Too many of my blog entries were posted late on a Friday, showing this was crammed in before going home. As I said, I also skimmed, so did not use the tools as fully as I would really have liked. But this isn't a 23 Things issue, it is an Antony having 5,000,023 things on the go issue..."

#### **Ekcragg** reflected in the **Captain's (B)log**:

"What I think I will take away from this programme that is of greatest importance is an understanding of how other people think about social media. I am an early adopter, a digital native, a digitalist, and social media is a large part of my home and work life. Sometimes it is difficult to appreciate how other people approach and evalu-

ate these tools. Reading about their experiences through the participant blogs helps me to gain perspective.

One of the great things that came out of the 23 Things programme at Oxford was the sense of community that developed among the participants. This is definitely the same here. There seems to be a buzz about 23 Things wherever I go; I hear people talking about it within their teams and in the staff room. In the corridor people approach me with glee to let me know exactly where they're up to and what thing they're currently tackling. I'll miss that when it's over."

Comments from some of the other participants' reflective blogs appear below:

*Ubuntu Moments* (Helen Ireland) blogged in *Arriving and Reflecting – The Last Post*:

"In my first blog entry, I referred to the programme as a pilgrimage and that's what it has been like, in some ways - a shared journey, where the participants became a micro community within the vast Web 2.0 community. We've worked together, learned from each other and there's always been someone to ask for guidance if I didn't interpret the instructions correctly. Social networking tools, by their nature, have to be shared."

*The Metadata Magician* (Rachel Care) blogged about Thing 23 :

"I've thoroughly enjoyed the 23 Things experience, and really feel like I've learnt a great deal about web 2.0. As both a computer scientist and a 'young person' I feel it's expected of me to understand all these technologies, and I now feel that I do! I would feel a lot more confident in making use of any of them either at work or at home."

*In the library with...* (Yvonne Budden) from ... a final post for 23 Things:

"I confidently said at the start I was a big user of Web 2.0 tools and I was just looking to brush up my skills, but I have found that I have learnt far more than I was expecting."

*Naughty Orange* (Natalie Hodgkiss) posted in Reflection Week:

"The style of the course is different to anything I have done previously: exploring and learning about online technology at my own pace, and then choosing to use or abandon whichever elements I like or dislike as I see fit. I think that posting blogs as a means of keeping track of our progress particularly suits this type of course, as it's kept wholly virtual."

## WEB 2.0+

The 23 Things programme was to come to an end on 18 March 2011 and all participants should have completed all 23 elements by then. In truth, we found that staff needed a little extra time so a short extension was granted, during which time certain parts of the library were like a Web 2.0 testing factory. Of all participants, 26 completed, equating to 59% of those who registered. Interestingly, this was the same percentage as in Oxford.

Staff had put in a massive effort so we needed a party. The unofficial twenty-fourth Thing was a celebration afternoon held in the library's Teaching Grid. Awards were given for Best Blog, Best Blog Name, Best Blog Post, Progress, and Peer Support. Even those of us who did not win a trophy won an award for something; Antony proudly took the title for best profile picture, as displayed at the top of this article.

## SO WHAT NEXT?

For the library staff, we hope to get participants to reflect on their experiences of 23 Things at the next staff open day. The 23 Things team are planning to run an amended programme over the summer in the hope to reach staff who have not been able to do (or keep up with) Things first time around. It will be good to have various people talk about how 23 Things @ Warwick 1.0 was for them to encourage others to take part next time.

For the library's offering, there is scope for rolling elements of the programme out more widely to our user communities. Friends have asked 'is this just a librarian thing?' Well, it needn't be. It is an information management thing. We have already run some sessions on Web 2.0 aimed at the students. Why shouldn't we be running a Number of Things for our students, academics and other users?

The amount of things we could do is limitless ... well, certainly more than 23.

## NOTES

*A shorter version of this article also appears in Panlibus Magazine*

- 1 See <http://23thingswarwick.blogspot.com>
- 2 See <http://plcmcl2-things.blogspot.com>
- 3 Tim O'Reilly, 'What is Web 2.0: design patterns and business models for the next generation of software (posted 30.09.2005)',

O'Reilly Media, <http://oreilly.com/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html>

- 4 See, for example, Paul Williams, 'Don't believe the hype: blogging with your feet on the ground', *SCONUL Focus*, 43, 2008, p.4-6, <http://www.sconul.ac.uk/publications/newsletter/43/2.pdf>
- 5 Jeffrey G. Trzeciak, 'McMaster University Libraries 2.0: transforming traditional organizations', *SCONUL Focus*, 44, 2008, p.4-10, <http://www.sconul.ac.uk/publications/newsletter/44/2.pdf>
- 6 Katharine Widdows, 'In your Facebook, not in your face', *ALISS quarterly*, 4(2), p.7-10, available via [http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/568/1/WRAP\\_Widdows\\_facebook.pdf](http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/568/1/WRAP_Widdows_facebook.pdf)
- 7 Leo Appleton and Alex Spiers, 'Learning 2.0@LJMU: a Web 2.0 staff development programme', *Library & information update*, November 2009, p.44-45
- 8 *Internet Librarian International* 2008, <http://www.internet-librarian.com/2008/program.php>
- 9 Ciara McCaffrey, Peter Reilly and Helen Feighan, '23 Things@UL: a web 2.0 learning experience for faculty and staff at the University of Limerick', *SCONUL Focus*, 50, 2010, p.25-28; Laura Wilkinson and Emma Cragg, '23 Things Oxford', *SCONUL Focus*, 50, 2010, p.29-31
- 10 See <http://www.slideshare.net/ekcragg/web-20-and-23-things-at-the-university-of-warwick>

All websites accessed October 2011