

## Internet

### Internet Librarian International Conference 2006

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*Institutional repositories, Web 2.0, online communities, wikis, and the "Dark Web" were among the themes of this year's conference.*

October 16th and 17th saw a gathering in London of over 300 delegates, speakers and sponsors from 27 countries for the largest ever Internet Librarian International conference. There was a broad range of themes at the conference, ranging from Web 2.0, library 2.0, search developments, providing services to dispersed communities, through to open access. I was particularly interested in papers about institutional repositories, since this is the focus of my work at Kingston University.

The institutional repositories strand concentrated on aspects of building repositories, especially how to get them populated. Richard Jones from Imperial College, and a DSpace developer, commented that institutional repository software is still very monolithic and effectively a first generation software tool, because it cannot be deeply integrated into enterprise software. He concentrated on discussing both open access and open source, as well as various copyleft licensing arrangements.

Cokie Anderson from Oklahoma State University gave the US viewpoint on repositories, where the issues are surprisingly similar to the concerns here in England. A common concern is ensuring content is submitted to the repository. Faculty members in American Universities are reluctant to submit details of their research into institutional repositories for a number of reasons, including interference with formal publication or patentability; concerns about ownership rights of the research; plagiarism by younger academics or students; or just that they cannot be bothered. A strong advocacy and outreach programme is seen as the best way to enrol faculty members into the benefits of including their material in an institutional repository.

This dilemma was echoed in another paper, "If you build it, will they come?", by Myoung C. Wilson from Rutgers University Libraries in the US, who presented details of her examination of how American University-based repositories are presented to the outside world. Many repositories are only shown as links from Library web pages, but is this really where faculty members will look for them? As a quick check on the situation here in the UK, I looked at Southampton University's external web pages to see if there was any mention of their repository. The only link was a QuickLink from their library web page; no mention of it on their research pages at all. This is particularly interesting because Southampton University is the creator of EPrints, another piece of open-source repository software. A further observation Myoung made was that there is a need to populate repositories for their initial launch, as nobody will add their items into an empty space.

This was a definite 'take-away' thought for me as Kingston's repository nears its official launch.

Away from the institutional repositories strand, Web 2.0 themes have matured over the last year. Delicious and flickr are now regarded as rather old hat and it's generally assumed, in a rather knowing way, that everyone knows what they are and how they work. This is, of course, nonsense, there are many people working in libraries who have not encountered Web 2.0 applications at any level.

There have been more developments in the use of audio as a way of reaching different audiences, whether using audio clips for audio tours in large libraries, or podcasting of talks given at public libraries or enabling teenagers to record their reviews of computer games at library gaming events.

Wikis are still seen as an interesting idea, but are proving to be challenging to establish. Brian Kelly and Marieke Guy, both from UKOLN, presented their experiences of using wikis. Marieke examined the state of wiki use within the public sector. She discovered there is not as much activity as was suggested last year in the press. There are very few externally available wikis produced by UK libraries, and those few that exist are not community-building. Many of the concerns around wikis are complex, ranging from vandalism, spam, copyright through to institutional acceptable use policies and defining whose view a wiki is representing. Brian detailed the evolution of the use of wikis at UKOLN and some of his experiences. Those involving wikis developed to serve one specific community for a specific event seemed to work very well and were welcomed by that community. It seems that the community needs to exist before a wiki can work.

RSS feeds are emerging as crucial building blocks in developing Web 2.0 applications. They are produced by a range of services from web pages, blogs, from social bookmarking tools and as a method to track changes to wikis. Several speakers mentioned suprglu, a relatively new service that allows a user to gather together a variety of RSS feeds into one Web page, using a range of templates. Jenny Levine demonstrated how she had produced a page for her local library to show them its possibilities. It seems to be a service worth taking a look at.

One particularly impressive example of how a range of technologies can be used to create a great resource came from the UK. Julia Wragge-Morley described the work of the British Council in providing materials about UK and Commonwealth writers and literature - in particular, EnCompassCulture, which is a worldwide reading group and has details of over 6,000 books for all age ranges. They have a Reader in Residence who blogs, sends out a newsletter and is involved in chats. It is also possible to find a reading group elsewhere in the world to be a 'twin' to your own. The Contemporary Writers

website provides detailed information about some of the UK and Commonwealth's most important living writers, including profiles, bibliographies and reviews. The British Council attempts to provide a service to people throughout the world, working to overcome a poverty of infrastructure in some areas. Behind the public space on these sites are areas that are available to particular closed communities, with participants often in many different countries. There are bulletin boards, podcasts, webchats and areas to cooperatively create pieces of work. Both these sites merit further investigation because of the depth of material they contain.

The Dark Web, yet another Web term, was introduced to us by Jane Macoustra of Tai-Pan Research, who described this as the term being used to encompass Internet techniques used by terrorist organisations and by those tracking their activities, for example using codes, aliases and pseudonyms as well as propaganda. The portal page she showed was from the University of Arizona, <http://ai.bpa.arizona.edu/research/terror/index.htm>. Jane also demonstrated a live Skype session with a colleague from the SLA Asia Chapter, based in Australia. After a brief technical hiccup, it worked and we were able to see and listen to her colleague describing Skype. It received an appreciative round of applause from the audience.

This just about sums up the conference feel, appreciation of those who've had a go and created new pathways, and interest in how they did it, leaving the attendees fired up to go and try it all out for themselves, looking again at services provided to see where these new techniques could extend our reach into new communities.

### Further browsing

<http://www.internet-librarian.com/index.shtml>

<http://www.suprglu.com/>

<http://www.encompassculture.com/>

<http://www.contemporarywriters.com/>