

## **Conference Report: Online Information 2007**

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I was interested in attending Online Information 2007 after reading the programme, which had a variety of appealing papers on the conference theme: 'Applying Web 2.0: Innovation, Impact and Implementation'. I am interested in the information behaviour of students and its impact on the library, which is the subject for my MA dissertation, and I am particularly interested in how these technologies are impacting on library services. It seems clear that the impact of and issues around Web 2.0 technologies and applications will play a considerable role in my professional career as a librarian. 'Track 3: Library & Publishing' seemed to address this area very well, with speakers exploring both the latest trends and innovations, but also the practicalities of using these tools within their various organisations. I applied for a student bursary from UKeIG and was very pleased when I discovered I had been successful.

The opening keynote address by Jimmy Wales was a stimulating insight into his own projects, Wikipedia and Wikia. He is a thought-provoking speaker who conveys his strong belief in his projects. He is also to the point and instigative, and yet he manages to be very diplomatic when discussing the issues and criticism surrounding Wikipedia and Wikia. The question-and-answer session was very engaging, and I enjoyed observing the dialogue between Jimmy and the audience.

Other interesting speakers were Steve Abrams of SirsiDynix on 'Putting 'Library 2.0' into perspective', Emma Shercliff on 'onestopenglish', and the session on 'New Skills for Information Profession', with Marydee Ojala and Karen Blakeman.

There were a number of themes, issues, and quirks that stood out over the course of the conference. The main issue was how we as professionals will use Web 2.0 technologies, both for ourselves and as part of the provision of services for users. Using the tools, and incorporating them into each day, seemed the solution to this issue (or at least the first step).

The buzz word was "millennial", which identified the generation of users that have grown up in an age when a child is able to put content onto the Web from their personal computers. There seems to be a lot of concern about how to address (or know) the needs

of these users when those in charge of provision are feeling a little out of touch with the technology. This got me questioning whether or not this concern was a new phenomena, or just a new context. One thing that seemed clear to me is that the new technologies allow these users to have a greater voice; but we need to know how to draw that into something useful for us. That is just one way out of many that these technologies can allow us to improve services.

One of the major questions that arose was how to prioritise content and context. This is a very complicated issue, and as someone who is new to the profession, I feel I need more time to examine it and gain experience with it. I know users do not want to work hard for good information, but what are the barriers between the information and the user? This is something I would like to look into in more depth.

With the full programme, the packed rooms and the huge exhibition hall, I felt quite overwhelmed by the last day. At times it felt impersonal and busy, but I feel that I came away from the event with a lot of ideas and questions that I would like to research further.