

## Web 2.0

**Phil Bradley**

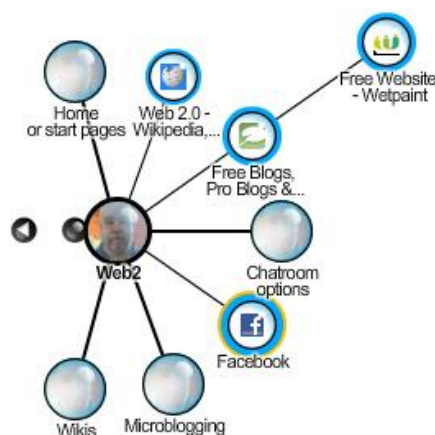
*This month's column looks at some recent Web 2.0 products*

### Some recent Web 2.0 resources

I'm very fortunate in that I'm able to spend a lot of my time exploring new resources to see what they do, how they work, and how they compare with their competition. In this column I thought I'd look at a few of the new products that have passed by my monitor in the last few months. No particular order this time around, which is actually part of the fun that I have – I'm never sure exactly what I'm going to find next.

### Pearltrees

One of the things that information professionals do well is to seek out good quality resources, which can then be passed onto colleagues. However, while the simple emailed list does the job perfectly well, there are a range of what I call 'guiding tools' which are now entering the marketplace. One of these is Pearltrees at <http://www.pearltrees.com/>, which allows users to create 'pearls' or trees of websites in a visual fashion, similar to mind mapping, and indeed the resource could be used for exactly that as well. URLs can be linked together in a typical tree style with subject branches as appropriate. I did a very brief one which you can find at <http://pear.ly/ngyl> which should be enough to give you a good idea as to how they work.



It's very easy to add new 'pearls' to an existing Pearltree by means of their handy little bookmarklet, so when you find a resource that you want to add to a tree it's the matter of a



cutting and pasting in the content from a Wikipedia entry for example you can get some striking images.

[The embed code for my image is: <a href=<http://www.flickr.com/photos/philbradley/4505995145/> title="Sherlock Holmes word cloud by Phil Bradley, on Flickr"></a> ] Moreover, as Tagxedo uses Microsoft Silverlight technology (which you may have to download before you can play with it properly) if you mouse over particular words they jump out to the front, so it's a very useful visual aid or training tool.

## WebKlipper

Another way of providing content quickly and easily is to use a resource such as WebKlipper at <http://webclipper.com/> The idea behind it is very simple – simply give it the URL of a page that interests you, or which you wish to comment on and WebKlipper loads the page into a frame onto their website, where you can highlight text, comment on it, extract and share it. WebKlipper then saves the page for you, together with your comments in its own URL that you can direct friends or colleagues to. You can also subscribe to a particular page and see if anyone else comments as well. Moreover, you can create your own page, for free, and without any signups either. It becomes a very simple blog page or website page if you want to share something quickly and easily.

## Checking website status

There's nothing more frustrating than trying to reach a website only to get some message or other which essentially says 'tough, this site isn't playing.' There's always a niggle at the back of your mind as to whether the site IS actually live, and it's your connection that's down. I've found three resources that will check to see if a site is up and running, and these can at least set your mind at rest, enabling you to go about the rest of your business knowing that no-one else can access that important site either. The first of these is the aptly named Downforeveryoneorjustme.com at <http://www.downforeveryoneorjustme.com/>, which I'll grant is a long URL, but it's also one that you're unlikely to forget though as you'll read in a moment, not necessarily the most memorable. Simply type in the URL that you want to check and it will tell you (generally within a second) if the site is, well, down for everyone or just you! The second site, which works in exactly the same way, is Netirk at <http://www.netirk.com/> and it works just as quickly. The last of the three is the rather laddishly named Titsup which has the interface 'Has \_\_\_\_\_ gone tits up?' and you can find it at <http://www.titsup.net> (A word of warning here – other variants of the domain name such as .com will in all likelihood not be

safe for work, so you're warned in advance.) A real belt and braces approach would be to try a couple of these just to be on the safe side, since it's theoretically possible that the site you're interested in could be down for both you AND the resource you use to check, but still up for other people.

## Screencasting software

I was taken via a Twitter link to a YouTube page recently, on which someone was giving a guided tour around a product. I was able to see what his cursor was doing, what he was typing into search boxes, zooming into parts of the screen and so on. Of most interest however was the fact that there was a small webcam image of him in the corner of the screen and this gave the tutorial an entirely different dimension – much more personal and informative somehow. Of course, once I'd seen it, I knew that I had to have a go at doing something like that myself! After a bit of trial and error I found a package called BB Flashback Express at <http://bit.ly/9a0YuE> which is a free product (registration required after 30 days however) although there is a commercial version available. It does require a download (if you're not allowed to download and install software, try Screentoaster at <http://www.screentoaster.com> which is browser driven) but is very straightforward. You can then use it to record your screen, or part of your screen and incorporate your webcam, or if you prefer, just an audio commentary, and then save the movies as Flash or AVI, installing them online or uploading them to YouTube, Blip.tv, Viddler or Revver. It's compatible with XP, Vista and Windows 7. You can use it to record something in a browser window, but that's not necessary, so if you wanted to create an online guide to using a library catalogue for example, it would be simplicity itself. If you want to take a look at a worked example I did a screencast of Pearltrees, and you can find it in my YouTube channel at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yd091\\_x0WNE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yd091_x0WNE) [If you want to embed it on the page, the code is <object width="480" height="385"><param name="movie" value="http://www.youtube.com/v/Yd091\_x0WNE&hl=en\_GB&fs=1"></param><param name="allowFullScreen" value="true"></param><param name="allowscriptaccess" value="always"></param><embed src="http://www.youtube.com/v/Yd091\_x0WNE&hl=en\_GB&fs=1" type="application/x-shockwave-flash" allowscriptaccess="always" allowfullscreen="true" width="480" height="385"></embed></object> ]

This rather neatly brings me back to my starting point, which is as good a point as any on which to end this column!