

# Introduction

*“Libraries need to be able to take reasoned risks to push the envelope when a clear trend emerges and a different way of envisioning and delivering services makes sense.”*

—Steve Watkins

In August 2005, when Michael Casey first began thinking about the implications of Web 2.0 for libraries, he never imagined that so many others in the library community were wondering the exact same thing. Indeed, librarians around the world were also thinking about how ubiquitous technology and the changing needs of library users would impact library service; all Michael did was give this discussion a name. At this point, Library 2.0 was merely a term without a clear definition. It came with one main question: How can Web 2.0 make libraries better?

Casey launched the first Library 2.0 blog in September 2005, naming it LibraryCrunch ([www.librarycrunch.com](http://www.librarycrunch.com)). Bloggers and librarians from around the world soon joined the discussion on their own blogs, at conferences, and in their libraries. In October 2005, shortly after LibraryCrunch was launched, we received word that Michael Stephens discussed Library 2.0 at the Internet Librarian 2005 conference in Monterey, California. In retrospect, it is unsurprising how quickly this concept developed and was picked up by other librarians. Even before the name was coined, elements of Library 2.0 were

already being discussed and debated—well before LibraryCrunch was created. Without the open-minded and constructively critical conversation that occurred over the next year, Library 2.0 may never have been clearly defined. Even though Casey is known for coining the term “Library 2.0,” no one person can take responsibility for the evolved definition or the wave of discussion that has made this model so popular and intriguing today.

Web 2.0 and Business 2.0 provided the impetus for the Library 2.0 name and for much of the initial discussion and attempts to clearly define Library 2.0. However large a role technology played in the initial discussion, it soon became clear that the changes libraries need to make to keep up with their users involve much more than just technology. Fortunately for library users, our understanding of what Library 2.0 can do for libraries evolved to include a method of constant change, which includes reevaluating library services and what our users need. Most importantly, Library 2.0 became less about what we can provide to our users and more about what we can allow our users to provide themselves. Participatory service and change are the heart of Library 2.0, and technology is a tool that can help us get there.

We hope this book will help librarians, library administrators, support staff, and students gain a greater understanding of what Library 2.0 is, and how it can be used to revitalize library services for our users. These concepts and ideas are relevant to public, academic, and special libraries. There is no one-size-fits-all model; however, the basic components of Library 2.0 can be applied to just about any library willing and able to take the necessary steps. Because of our public library experience, much of the discussion in this book involves examples from public libraries, although we believe you will still find the content applicable to your organization.

We decided to write this book for the same reason that much of the library community has taken an interest in Library 2.0: We want to improve library service. Every librarian has the goal of offering the best possible service to library users. Library 2.0 can help us achieve and maintain this goal in a rapidly changing environment.

In April 2006, we conducted an online survey about change using the SurveyMonkey Web site ([www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)). Survey questions, statistics, and some responses are provided in Appendix A, and we refer to this survey and its responses several times throughout this book. In this survey, we sought the input of librarians, library staff, and library administrators. We asked questions that would help us gain a greater understanding of how respondents view the effects of change on services, procedures, and other operations within their libraries. Survey respondents had a lot to say about change:

- “Change for the sake of having change is not good enough. There needs to be a direction, target, or goal. The change needs to be measurable and objective—subjective change is OK when it supports the overall goal, but it’s a mushy measure.”
- “I like many of the changes our administrator has handed down to us to implement, but sometimes feel shut out of the decision process. Many librarians I meet (at conferences) seem way too tradition-bound and seek comfort from each other so that they may remain ‘stagnated’ yet another year. I hear a lot about how patrons just don’t understand.”
- “Embracing change can be scary. But once a library starts to change and decides to see change as a constant state, then it becomes easier and easier. Rather like kinetic energy, it is easier to change when you are already moving forward.”
- “So much is still ‘the way we’ve always done it.’ My supervisor is very supportive of new ideas, but my co-workers, the library lifers, are not.”
- “Change is good. However, when you have limited resources you have to be careful how you go about it. You also have to have a high tolerance for failure and the patience to stick with something you know will work until it finds its place.”
- “The key is to not stick with the changes that failed. Don’t be afraid to say something isn’t working and go back to how you used to do it.”

- “What is wearing down me and my co-workers is rampant, ill-conceived, unscheduled change with little input from people on the front lines. If change was managed differently, the results would be much better.”
- “This is a very exciting time to be working in libraries, and I think that it will be that way for many years to come. At first, I hesitated to go to library school, but as I saw the changes taking place in librarianship, I was convinced that that was where I wanted to be.”

Libraries have changed quite a bit over the past couple of decades. In fact, many of the survey responses we received commented on the fact that change itself is already happening; it just isn’t always well managed or fails to incorporate the type of change that will best meet our customers’ changing needs. Much of this book describes a method for managing change that we and many other librarians would like see libraries adapt—and libraries *must* adapt to keep up with the changing needs of our users. Here’s the truth:

- We are losing the interest of our users.
- We no longer consistently offer the services our users want.
- We are resistant to changing services that we consider traditional or fundamental to library service.
- We are no longer the first place many of our current and potential customers look for information.

Given these challenges, how can a library keep its current customers *and* reach potential users who are not already using its services? We hope this book will help you answer this question for your organization.

Chapter 1 explains that there is no one way to get to Library 2.0 that works for all organizations; you must consider both your library’s stated mission and your community’s needs. Chapter 2 covers the basics of Library 2.0, including an introduction to each of the essential components that will get you there. Chapter 3 explains the importance

of knowing your market and competition and providing easy ways to remain aware of your customers' needs and wants. Constant change, a major component of Library 2.0 that is briefly introduced in Chapter 2, is explained in greater detail in Chapter 4, which also includes a method for implementing a system of continual change into your organizational structure. Chapter 5 covers another major component of Library 2.0, user participation, and also discusses the ability for libraries to reach the Long Tail using participatory services and constant change. Chapter 6 provides examples of technologies that libraries can use as tools to reach their Library 2.0 goals. Achieving buy-in from staff, administrators, and the governing board of a library is discussed in Chapter 7. Chapter 8 provides suggestions your organization can use to maintain the momentum for change toward Library 2.0. Chapter 9 covers final considerations about Library 2.0 and the changing needs of library users.

It is our hope that you will use this book to start the process of implementing Library 2.0 changes in your organization. Enjoy!