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**“Punching Above Our Weight:  
A Small Scottish Library Service joins the Global Community”**

**Anthony Browne**  
Service Development Officer  
East Renfrewshire Council  
Community Services  
Scotland  
UK  
Tel: (UK) 0141 577 3101  
Email: [anthony.browne@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:anthony.browne@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk)

**Christine Rooney-Browne**  
PhD Research Student  
Department of Computer and Information Sciences  
University of Strathclyde  
Glasgow  
UK  
Tel: (UK) 0141 632 5822  
Email: [Christine.Rooney-Browne@cis.strath.ac.uk](mailto:Christine.Rooney-Browne@cis.strath.ac.uk)

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**Abstract**

*This paper discusses the ongoing journey of East Renfrewshire Library and Information Service (ERLIS) as it attempts to embrace the concepts of Web 2.0 and Library 2.0 within the constraints of a limited financial budget. It also presents a step by step guide for other library services interested in joining the social networking community; highlighting challenges and offering solutions based on the experiences of ERLIS.*

*Although still in its infancy the project has been very well received by a variety of library stakeholders and other library authorities; demonstrating the important role that public libraries can play in building virtual communities. It has also inspired debate in the national press and as a result, improved user perceptions and the overall profile of the library service.*

### **A small Scottish library service joins the global community**

This paper will discuss the first phase in an ongoing campaign by East Renfrewshire Library and Information Service (ERLIS) to reach out and interact with individuals and communities to deliver a more interactive online library service that fits with the evolving lifestyles of current users and those less likely to access physical buildings and static websites.

The key objectives will be to:

- Discuss the ongoing journey of ERLIS as it becomes more Web 2.0 compatible.
- Highlight the challenges encountered thus far and offer solutions for library services to overcome in the future.
- Demonstrate the value of adopting Library 2.0 in a public library context.

Before we embark upon our twelve week journey with ERLIS this paper will present a brief overview of the traditional role of public libraries and their place within a constantly evolving 24/7 information society. It will also introduce the concepts of Web 2.0 and Library 2.0 and discuss their relevance to the future success of public libraries.

### **Public libraries**

Public libraries mean different things to different people and the impact that a visit to the library can have on individuals and the community differs significantly (Linley & Usherwood, 1998, p.21). Their social and economic value to society, although difficult to define, is nonetheless priceless.

A trip to the public library, whether that be the physical building or its online location, invites groups and individuals to explore a world of cultures and imagination; it has the capacity to break down barriers, thus promoting democracy on a variety of levels; it can inform and challenge visitors of all ages; offer independent help and advice; present the opportunity to learn new things and meet new people; it can even save lives.

### **The traditional role of the public library**

It is universally accepted that the traditional role of the public library service is to promote “education, literacy, information, leisure and culture”, making available its full range of services to everyone within the community, “regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or social status” (UNESCO, 1994).

These traditional roles are evident in the myriad services provided by public libraries, which:

- Enable intellectual freedom.
- Safeguard democratic values.
- Present balanced information.
- Promote information literacy, access and social inclusion.
- Address the digital divide.
- Celebrate cultural diversity.

(IFLA, 2005).

### **Challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

In addition to delivering its traditional role, the modern day public library is under increasing pressure to adapt to meet the evolving needs and expectations of a diverse range of stakeholders; users, non users, library staff, associated organisations, members of local government and local businesses. Some commentators have observed that the current financial and political climate means that libraries are more accountable to these stakeholders and are under increasing pressure to justify their place and value in an ever-changing information society (Elkin and Train, 2001, p.295; McMenemy, 2007, p. 273). In fact, since the early 1990s, numerous academics, professionals and commentators have observed that the concept of the public library in an increasingly commercialised ‘24/7’ information and entertainment society has become ever more subjective (Comedia, 1993; Usherwood, 1996, 1998

and 2007; Linley and Usherwood 1998; Elkin and Train, 2001; Bryson et al 2002; Train, 2003; Chowdhury et al, 2006; McMenemy, 2007).

### **A 24/7 information society**

Webster (2004) argues that Information Communication Technologies (ICT's), such as the internet and the world wide web, are as significant to the 'Information Revolution' as "mechanization was to the industrial revolution"; drawing parallels between the impact of electricity and steam power on the Industrial Revolution and ICT's on the Information Revolution (Webster, 2004. p.10).

Access to the internet enables users to search for and retrieve just about every type of information, at any time and in any place. Many of the traditional services offered by public libraries, such as accessing information, browsing books, seeking advice, meeting friends, chatting, reading newspapers are now available online, as part of a virtual world.

Miller observed that in order "to avoid disintermediation, libraries must compete for attention" in an increasingly 'switched on' information environment (2006, p. 3). Commercial search engines such as Google and ChaCha offer a convenient, albeit inappropriate alternative to the library; social networking sites such as Facebook, Bebo, Myspace and Second Life provide virtual destinations that appear to challenge the library's role as a social space.

This has led to the inevitable questioning of the relevance of libraries in today's 24/7 information society:

The library's information provider crown is slipping. Justifiably or not, today libraries are increasingly viewed as outdated, with modern, Internet-based services, such as Amazon and Google, looking set to inherit the throne" (Chad & Miller, 2005, p.4).

### **Are libraries still essential destinations?**

Over the last 150 years public libraries have provided "a place for the whole community to come together as individuals, in families and as a community to read, learn and discover" (Dolan, 2007, p. 7). The authors of this paper would argue that the role of public libraries within virtual communities is just as important and valuable as their role within physical communities.

Certainly, in a society dominated by new technology the public library is "more essential now than ever before" (Public Agenda, 2006, p.11). Although the internet presents myriad opportunities to gain access to innumerable information sources and to interact with other people on a global scale it also presents massive challenges for individuals and society. Public libraries have an invaluable role to play within physical and virtual communities as they try to get to grips with all that this new technology can offer; presenting a solution and guiding light for many who would otherwise be left behind due to barriers such as age, social status and information overload.

It is essential, therefore, that public libraries gain an understanding of the concepts of Web 2.0 and Library 2.0 to ensure that they can deliver the type of library service that best meets the evolving needs and expectations of 21<sup>st</sup> century society.

### **What is Web 2.0?**

Web 2.0 refers to the second generation of the web; the version that emerged from the dot com crash of the early 2000s. IT guru Tim O'Reilly is widely credited for coining the phrase and offers this compact definition:

Web 2.0 is the network as platform, spanning all connected devices; Web 2.0 applications are those that make the most of the intrinsic advantages of that platform; delivering software as a continually-updated service that gets the better the more people use it, consuming and remixing data from multiple sources, including individual users, while providing their own data and services in a form that allows remixing by others, creating network effects through

an “architecture of participation”, and going beyond the page metaphor of Web 1.0 to deliver rich user experiences (O’Reilly, 2005a).

In other words, Web 2.0 represents an evolution from the static "read only" notion of web pages to dynamic, interactive pages encouraging users to create, interact and share content across multiple applications.

In what has become regarded as the seminal paper on Web 2.0 O’Reilly offers a “meme map” to better illustrate the concept:

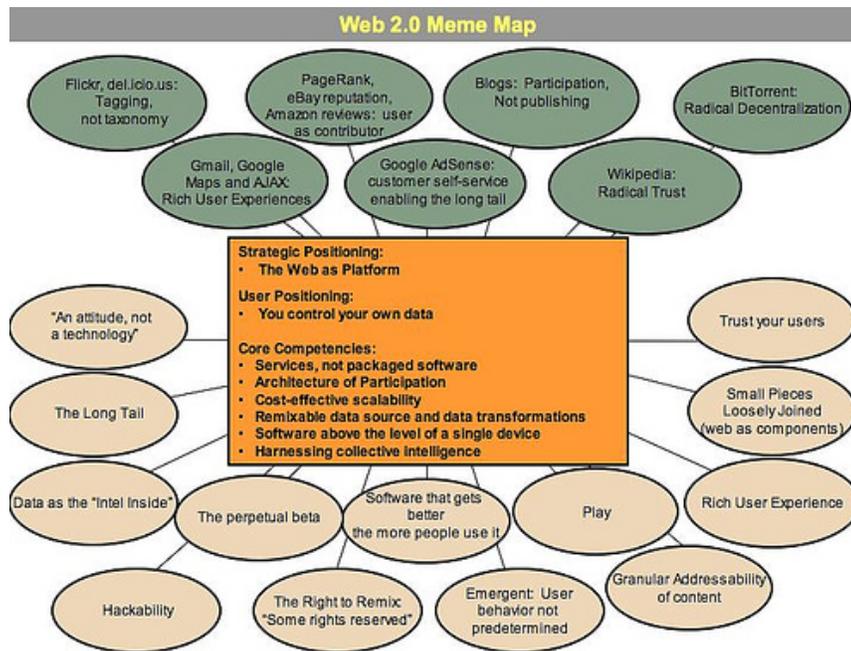


Figure. 1 – Web 2.0 Meme Map (O’Reilly, 2005b)

In the world of Web 2.0, online reference encyclopaedias, such as Britannica Online, which showcase information from an approved academic source becomes a user-generated interactive hub, such as Wikipedia; hosting the collective intelligence of multiple global users. Wikis become an attractive and effective alternative to traditional content management systems. Personal static websites with multiple 'read only' pages evolve into blogs and social networking sites, inviting comments and discussion; offering users the opportunity to share tagged information and multimedia content, and opportunities to subscribe to RSS feeds and customise their unique online experience.

It is clear that the second generation of the internet offers massive potential for participation and collaboration; but where do public libraries fit into this interactive landscape?

### **How does Web 2.0 relate to libraries?**

Libraries on the web are certainly not a new idea; online public access catalogues (OPACs) were common place in the 1990s when they replaced traditional card catalogues. Although OPACs formed an important part of the first generation of the web (Web 1.0) these websites were predominantly static, providing a service that was neither intuitive nor sensitive to individual needs.

Web 2.0 encourages people to build communities online and interact on a global scale. This has led to a change in how we meet, exchange ideas and form societies. Web 2.0 offers public libraries an opportunity to remain relevant to the lives of 21<sup>st</sup> century users, enabling them to occupy a space within their virtual world (Curran et al, 2007, p. 296).

### **Library 2.0**

In 2006 Michael Casey introduced the concept of Library 2.0 on his *Library Crunch* blog (Miller, 2006, p.1). Casey championed the idea of a second generation of library services believing they offered solutions for libraries to efficiently and effectively meet the constantly evolving needs of users:

The heart of Library 2.0 is user-centered change. It is a model for library service that encourages constant and purposeful change, inviting user participation in the creation of both the physical and the virtual services they want, supported by consistently evaluating services. It also attempts to reach new users and better serve current ones through improved customer-driven offerings. Each component by itself is a step toward better serving our users; however, it is through the combined implementation of all of these that we can reach Library 2.0.

(Casey, 2006).

Some, within the library profession consider this definition to be too broad with the potential to create confusion rather than cohesion (Lawson, 2006, Peek, 2005, Tebbutt, 2006, Crawford, 2006 all quoted in Maness, 2006, p. 2). The authors of this paper agree and consider that Maness offers a more concise interpretation of Library 2.0 for library service managers:

the application of interactive, collaborative, and multi-media web-based technologies to web-based library services and collections...it is user centered; a multi-media experience; socially rich; and community innovative

(Maness, 2006, pp. 2, 6).

Library commentators continue to adapt the initial theory of Library 2.0 and in 2006 the concept of Public Library 2.0 was introduced. It adopted elements of Library 2.0 and applied them to a public library context to deliver a "network of community knowledge" (Chowdhury et al, 2006, p. 454).

Now that we have discussed the way in which libraries can benefit from Web 2.0 and Library 2.0 technologies, the next section of this paper attempts to present the achievements and challenges that ERLIS experienced over the last three months as they attempted to establish their space within the virtual community.

### **East Renfrewshire Library & Information Service 2.0 (ERLIS 2.0)**

ERLIS caters for a diverse and multi-denominational population of 89,311, with ten community libraries. It operates a visionary and progressive strategy, CONNECT-ER; aiming to promote the library “as a gateway to learning, information, reading, culture and government” (ERC, 2005, p. 9). The library service has 45,703 members and attracts an average of 21,551 active borrowers per month and 41,425 physical visits per month (ERLIS, 2008).

Despite the fact that ERLIS already offers an excellent library website attracting an average of 16,687 page hits per month and 1,184 online library visitors per month, it was a growing concern that users were failing to interact sufficiently (ERLIS, 2008). This view was reflected in the results of an international survey carried out by OCLC in 2005. It revealed that although 96% of internet users had visited a public library, only 27% (9% in the UK) reported accessing the public library’s website (Miller, 2006, p. 4). Libraries, it would appear, had been unsuccessful in creating a desirable online destination for users.

### **Delivering a fully integrated and participative library service**

Maness (2006) recommends that as libraries move towards a second generation of service delivery (Library 2.0) they should attempt to integrate the following Web 2.0 services:

- Synchronous messaging; enabling real time online chat with librarians.
- Streaming media; producing video and audio resources for users.
- Blogs and Wikis; creating up to date content and information and encouraging interaction and collaboration with users.
- Social networks; encouraging people to share information and connect to others with similar interests.
- Tagging; replacing taxonomy with folksonomy to allow users to contribute to metadata.
- RSS feeds; ensuring access to the latest news and updates.
- Mashups; combining a variety of Web 2.0 technologies to create a bespoke service for users.

(Maness, 2006).

With Maness’ recommendations in mind ERLIS began the first phase in an ongoing campaign to deliver a fully integrated virtual library community.

### **Project objectives**

ERLIS hoped that by introducing the concept of Library 2.0 the service would be in a better position to:

- Promote awareness of and engagement with the library service.
- Provide residents with the opportunity to learn Web 2.0 skills.
- Create a workforce able to educate residents about how to effectively manage their virtual lives.
- Establish a virtual community for East Renfrewshire residents to visit and help to build.
- Encourage participation and collaboration between different types of residents (e.g. young, old, affluent, unemployed).

### **Why SNS?**

Although inspired by the success of independent Library 2.0 websites such as Ann Arbor District Library, ERLIS, like many small library services lacked sufficient financial resources and technical expertise to create a fully integrated Web 2.0 site of their own. Following exploration of cost effective alternatives it was decided that by using an already established free SNS application ERLIS could realistically reach out and interact with individuals and communities outwith the constraints of the 'walled garden'. This option delivered an advantage over the Ann Arbor model as it allowed the library service to reach out to existing and potential users to communicate with them 'on their terms', in a space that they were already frequenting. This also reflected the views of Miller in his 2006 white paper on the challenges of Library 2.0:

...as well as continuing to offer services to those who come to us, we need to reach beyond the boundaries of the library space, and begin pushing services out to people in the places that they are already interacting

(Miller, 2006, p. 8).

In October 2007 Nielsen reported that for the first time ever the amount of 'hits' for SNS sites, such as Facebook and MySpace, exceeded the number of hits for web based e-mail websites, such as Hotmail and Google Mail. This marked a distinct change in how people were choosing to interact online, illustrating the growth of SNS sites as the preferred means of online communication between networks of friends. The statistics also revealed that the UK had become the second largest social networking market in the world, with 18.9 million member communities, second only to the USA. It also highlighted that 40% of adults in the UK with an internet connection subscribed to at least one social network account (Social Networking Watch, 2008). At the start of 2008 it appeared that SNS was going from strength to strength.

ERLIS had no desire to enter into the SNS world blindly and so set up a period of consultation to determine the format of the Facebook pages and to address potential challenges and discuss appropriate solutions for complications related to:

- Privacy issues.
- Library ethics.
- Legal implications.
- Advertising.
- Staff training.
- Creating awareness.
- Encouraging participation.

In order to address these issues ERLIS conducted an internal evaluation of the most popular SNS providers to determine the one that presented the best fit for the service. In the section that follows, the paper discusses how the service arrived at the decision to select Facebook as the preferred SNS provider.

## Choosing between Bebo, Facebook and MySpace

Computing Which? Magazine had recently carried out an independent study to assess the ten most popular SNS sites, based on the following:

- User friendliness
- The range of features
- Privacy and security

Bebo emerged in first place with 79%, Facebook a close second with 74%, while Myspace, at 67% ranked in third place (Smithers, 2008).

These three SNS websites also featured highly in another survey analysing the frequency of website visits by UK based users; Facebook enjoyed 2.38% of all UK site visits with Bebo gaining 2.16% and MySpace 1.67% (Hitwise Intelligence, 2008).

Using a bespoke evaluation matrix (Figure 5) ERLIS were able to determine which of the three most popular SNS providers' best suited their social networking needs. The evaluation revealed the following:

**Setup and usability** - based on the ease of setting up an account and searching for relevant groups and information, Facebook scored higher than MySpace and Bebo for its clear navigation and by not allowing customisable wallpapers on user profiles. Facebook profiles also scored higher than Bebo and MySpace as they proved less cluttered and more standardised across the platform.



Figure 2 – Facebook Login



Figure 3 – MySpace Login



Figure 4 – Bebo Login

**Privacy settings** - as Bebo is primarily aimed at a younger audience (13-24 years), they had the clearest privacy settings. However Facebook's privacy settings allowed users to set levels of privacy for individual elements within a single page and also allowed users to determine what parts individual 'friends' had access to. This provided flexibility and autonomy for users.

**Free from advertising** - a visit to the login pages of each site can illustrate the various approaches to advertising (Figures 2, 3, 4). As both a library and council facility it is vital to maintain a position of independence, therefore, importance was placed upon minimising users' exposure to 3<sup>rd</sup> party advertisers. All of the sites, although free to use, are funded by advertising, therefore it was impossible to have an entirely advert free environment. However, Facebook presented the best and least intrusive option by far.

**Library Suitability** - only Facebook provided a dedicated page layout for libraries, with organisations on Myspace and Bebo having to adapt their content to shoehorn themselves into categories created for individuals, not organisations. Facebook had made a conscious effort to embrace libraries and librarians and further research revealed that librarians across the world had

already started using the application to build communities; ‘We Love Public Libraries’, ‘Support Public Libraries’, ‘NextGen Librarians’, ‘Librarians and Facebook’ and ‘Librarians Rock’.

**Overall Popularity** - based on independent quantitative research carried out by Hitwise (2008) and Nielsen (2008).

**Overall Ranking** – emerged following combining the scores for each individual assessment criteria (Scoring Key: 1= least suitable; 5 = most suitable).

The final evaluation matrix (Figure 5) illustrates the overall scores and eventual ranking for each SNS:

Evaluation Matrix	Setup & Usability	Privacy Settings	Free from Advertising	Library Suitability	Overall Popularity	Total Score	Overall Ranking
Facebook	3	4	4	5	5	21	1
MySpace	3	3	1	2	4	13	3
Bebo	4	4	2	3	3	16	2

Figure 5 - ERLIS SNS Evaluation Matrix  
(Browne, 2008)

Facebook emerged as the best fit for ERLIS as it provided:

- Top ranking for popularity.
- Dedicated profiles for libraries.
- Clear navigation, profiles and searches.
- Sophisticated privacy settings.
- Less advertising.

**Addressing legal and ethical implications**

The evaluation criterion was helpful in enabling ERLIS to make a more informed decision about which SNS to opt for. However, bearing in mind that “public libraries are trusted, impartial public spaces” (McMenemy, 2008) they felt that there were still some outstanding issues related to ethics, legality and staff training to address prior to the launch of library pages on Facebook.

Contact was made with East Renfrewshire Council’s legal team to make sure that they were happy for the library service to establish an SNS profile. Following consultation, guidelines were produced and uploaded onto each webpage to educate users on ‘How to Exercise Safe Surfing when using the Internet and SNS’.

A disclaimer was also created to highlight that ERLIS did not endorse any of the advertisements that appeared on the library pages. An example of this can be observed below:

The presence of any advertisement on these Webpages is not an endorsement of the authenticity or quality of the goods, services or website and the council will not be held responsible for any claims arising in that respect (ERLIS, 2008).

**An informed workforce**

ERLIS felt passionately that they had a responsibility to disseminate knowledge about Web 2.0 and Library 2.0 to the wider community. The library supervisors from each of ERLIS ten community libraries were invited to attend an introductory session. The aim of this was to create awareness and educate front line staff on how to use the emerging technology and to address any concerns that they might have, so that they could communicate this back to library users. The staff training is ongoing and extends beyond the use of SNS; this will be discussed further later in the paper.

Having established a preferred SNS provider and addressing pertinent issues in advance ERLIS were prepared for the next step on the journey; setting up Facebook pages for each of the ten community libraries. In the next section the authors will present a step by step toolkit to help readers to visualise each stage in the process and help other library managers to create and manage Facebook pages for themselves.

### **Step 1 - Setting up the Facebook pages**

The first step in populating the ERLIS Facebook pages was to copy over the basic information from the static website. Using the existing Facebook template this included:

- Uploading photographs, locations, opening times and contact details for each branch.
- Setting up a link to Googlemap, via Facebook to help users locate the physical library (this happens automatically).
- Featuring a hyperlink to the existing library website to ensure that both the static site and the Facebook page for each service was able to co-exist and share users across applications.
- Managing settings to restrict specific users from accessing the pages (this was an option that ERLIS did not exploit).

### **Step 2 – Building on the platform**

The next stage involved adding another application called “Extended Information” which enabled the inclusion of additional service information and hyperlinks, specific to each branch:

- Services for Adults and Young People.
- Learning Centres.
- How to join your local library.
- Guidelines for protecting personal data online.
- Awareness of the safe surfing policy.
- Opportunities to ‘link in’ to other pages related to East Renfrewshire:
  - Community Services.
  - Relevant Facebook library groups.
- Adding simple HTML which allowed uploading of the ERLIS logos:
  - “World at you’re your Fingertips”.
  - “Charter Mark”.

### Step 3 - Creating an interactive space

- **The Wall** provides a space for users to leave comments, feedback or participate in asynchronous chat with the library service or other ‘fans’.
- **The discussion board** element provides a platform to host a mini forum; this was used by ERLIS to gain feedback from users on issues related to customer service and to publicise events.
- The **mini-feed** enables ERLIS to ‘push’ information to users; enabling them to quickly identify new content:
  - As a fan, users can subscribe to mini feeds which appear on their own news feeds and the feeds of other ‘friends’ who subscribe to their feed.
  - ERLIS used this mini feed option to send group messages to all fans to communicate changes in service provision and to promote new events.
- **The ‘Events’ section** was used to announce upcoming events and to display hyperlinks to information on how to reserve tickets.
- The **streaming media** applications will be used to upload videos, such as user guides and films of author events; they also enable the uploading of photos and promotional campaigns. Both of these applications enable page administrators and users to post comments.

### Step 4 - Administration and moderation

Moderators are anonymous; enjoying administrator rights and the power to remove unsuitable content, such as defamatory statements. There are no restrictions on the amount of moderators allowed for each page therefore ERLIS chose specific members of staff within each library to take responsibility for administering user generated content for their branch page.

Moderators and administrators are also able to track usage of each page to determine:

- Number of ‘hits’ for each page.
- Number of new fans joining the page or old fans leaving.
- An overview of posts, discussion topics and photo views.

These statistics are automatically plotted on a graph (Figure 6) which charts visits over a period of two weeks and enabled ERLIS to observe how users were interacting with the service, highlighting the elements that worked and those that did not.

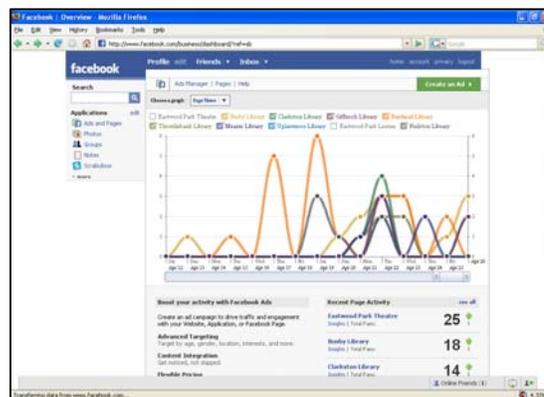


Figure 6 – Facebook Usage Stats

Reaching a fan base of 10 makes it possible for the administrator to observe additional trend information related to gender and age, using Facebook’s ‘Insights’ tool. A graph illustrating the history of each page is created automatically. ERLIS download this graph regularly, preserving their own MS Excel record.

### Step 5 - Publishing the Facebook pages



- Press releases sent to local and national newspapers; the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP); the Scottish Library and Information Council (SLAINTE).
- Photographs of staff interacting with the Facebook pages were uploaded onto Flickr.
- Creation of a static page on the council website:
  - To introduce users to Facebook, explaining the benefits of participation and providing a set of hyperlinks to all of the pages.
- Posters (Figure 8 & Figure 9) displayed in libraries and other council facilities:
  - Featuring URLs for each page.
  - To widen the reach of the campaign and publicise to both users and non-users.
- Library staff were encouraged to participate in viral marketing; promoting the pages to users via word of mouth.
- E-mail featuring information and hyperlinks was also sent out to the database of internal staff.
- Appointment of a Facebook Champion for each library branch:
  - Responsible for updating content, moderating discussions and updating users on the latest news / issues affecting the community of East Renfrewshire.
  - In the long term the Champions will create new content and transfer and adapt old content from ERLIS original static website onto its Web 2.0 counterparts.
- Establishing a ‘fan base’ with existing social networkers:
  - Users must already have a Facebook account in order to become a ‘fan’ of ERLIS.
  - ERLIS posted bulletin board messages about the new Facebook pages on the Glasgow network, which boasts 107,442 members.
  - News of the library pages also appeared on the mini feeds of Glasgow network subscribers and provided a link to ‘Become a Fan’.



Figure 8 – Promotional Poster 1



Figure 9 – Promotional Poster 2

### **Step 7 – Reaching social networkers through targeted advertising**

The ‘Social Ad’ facility on Facebook provides an additional opportunity to use paid for ‘price per click’ advertising to publicise events and market information directly to users who fit a specific profile. ERLIS exploited this opportunity to promote author events and it has proven a cost effective way to reach those users who may not traditionally visit a library; neither its physical location nor its virtual one.

In May 2008 ERLIS managed to secure an event with best selling American author Jodi Picoult. This is a major coup for the library service as in the past Jodi’s publishers have favoured bookshops over libraries for author events. It is imperative, therefore, that the event is a success.

A ‘Social Ad’ was created to target ‘all users’ in the ‘Glasgow area’ who specified Jodi Picoult as their favourite author or ‘My Sister’s Keeper’ as their favourite book on their ‘personal information’ section. Eighty people were highlighted by the Facebook search as ‘fitting’ the relevant criteria. ERLIS decided to trial the ‘Social Ad’ facility by agreeing to purchase advertising space which would enable the event to feature on these personal pages. The advertisements were chosen to run until the date of the event and ERLIS agreed to pay \$0.05 per click that the advertisement achieved. If no ‘click throughs’ were achieved then there would be no costs incurred.

The Jodi Picoult events had not yet occurred at the time of writing this paper but initial feedback from Facebook networkers has been positive.

### **Improving the offline profile of the library service**

ERLIS’s arrival on the SNS arena was exciting, not only for East Renfrewshire but for the library profession as a whole. It became the first council in the United Kingdom to allow users to have full access to community services information via a social networking website. In addition to obvious benefits such as improving the knowledge and abilities of staff and library users and enabling the service to reach out beyond the constraints of the physical building, the service has also enjoyed major PR benefits.

The story was picked up by national broadsheets, The Scotsman (which ran a half page of editorial), The Times newspaper and various local publications (The Extra, Southside News) not to mention several mentions and links to the resources on various UK based librarian blogs. This led to increased awareness across a variety of audiences.

To date seven other local authorities in the UK have contacted ERLIS for advice and information about setting up their own Facebook pages.

Although it is still too early to determine the value that this new venture has delivered, anecdotal evidence from heads of service, staff and library users confirms that, so far the campaign has been a success. The following comments have appeared across different media platforms and have been chosen to illustrate the perceived value of the initiative:

*“It creates a forum for discussion where users can tell us what they like and don’t like about the services so that we can keep improving...”*

Councillor Mary Montague, East Renfrewshire Council.

*“...a good way for the council to keep in touch with constituents...by offering this platform, they [ERLIS] are opening up the discussion, encouraging community spirit and making the organisation that bit more approachable”*

Andrew Thomson, Internet Consultant (quoted in MacLeod, 2008).

*“East Renfrewshire have done a great job of embracing this technology whilst showing that they are aware of and able to address the potential problems. It is evidently a project that has been clearly*

*thought through and implemented, not just a blind stab in the dark at libraries attempting to be 'cool', and as such I imagine it could be very successful"*

Carly Cox, Librarian and Social Networker.

To date ERLIS's Facebook pages have attracted fans, not only from East Renfrewshire and surrounding areas but also from Australia, London, Oklahoma, Saudi Arabia and Toronto; testament to the claim that social networking has enabled the library service to widen its reach.

### **An opportunity to grow**

ERLIS are keen to continue on their journey to become more Web 2.0 compatible and have a strong desire to increase their Library 2.0 presence. Facebook offers additional free applications which will enable the service to further develop its interactive SNS space:

- Visual bookshelves.
- Book reviews.
- Book of the day.
- OPAC search facilities.

### **A need for investment**

As previously discussed ERLIS does not operate a separate Library 2.0 budget. This is why, at the early stages of the project, they have relied upon adopting free applications. However, in April 2008 the service was awarded £8,400 from the Scottish Library and Information Council's Innovation and Development Fund. This will provide a much needed cash injection for the authority and enable ERLIS to realise its dream of an integrated and participative virtual library service through:

- Ongoing staff training for emerging Library 2.0 technologies
  - Knowledge will filter down to the community through workshops and classes.
  - Class participants will create East Renfrewshire's Local History Wiki and establish a Book Group Blog.
- Educating schoolchildren at local Barrhead High School to become 'Student Web 2.0 Champions'
  - Champions will become volunteer buddies to spread information and knowledge to the other twenty-four primary and seven secondary schools in East Renfrewshire.
- 'Pulse FM', East Renfrewshire's community radio station will produce content for podcasting.
- RSS feeds will be introduced onto the council's current static website; this will update users quickly about the arrival of new stock and availability of learning classes.

### **Under development**

As previously discussed, ERLIS are at the initial stages of a long term campaign to create a fully integrated and participative virtual library service. In the previous sections the authors have discussed the first three months of this journey. The next section of the paper will discuss plans for the future, highlighting activities, which at the time of writing were classed as ‘under development’.

### **Local History Wiki**

Work is ongoing to create a Wiki of the existing content that appears on the library service’s ‘Portal to the Past’ website. This website currently has 1752 articles and is regarded as an invaluable resource by the community. It is hoped that by opening up the content for user comments and input the Wiki will attract local people to contribute their own photographs, thoughts, stories to create a collective memory for East Renfrewshire and an online social history of the area. The Wiki will be used in training sessions as a way of illustrating to users how easy it is to get involved.

### **East Renfrewshire TV (ERTV)**

In a selection of East Renfrewshire’s public libraries there are large plasma screens, which are used to promote local events and library innovations. ERLIS have liaised with the provider of this service to create a website where users can login from home to view the same content as that which is displayed in the library. Users can also setup an RSS feed for automatic notification of new content; the content can also be downloaded to Itunes so it can be viewed on an Ipod.

### **Bookgroup Blog**

The ERLIS Bookgroup Blog will provide a platform for East Renfrewshire’s ten book groups to keep an online record of the books they are currently reading and upload member comments. This will enable housebound users or those who are unable to attend the actual meetings to be involved in the group by contributing online. This will also serve as a preservation tool, building an archive of books read and reviews. It is also hoped that it will encourage dialogue and cross communication between the different library book groups within East Renfrewshire.

### **Conclusion**

The internet represents a modern day ‘public sphere’, much like the public library; a place where citizens can come together to challenge political views and promote democracy (Habermas, 1989; Mided, 2000). The evolution of the web and the introduction of concepts such as Web 2.0 and Library 2.0 have changed “the ways in which communities interact socially” (Curran et al. 2007, p. 291).

Although ERLIS are confident that their ten public libraries will continue to thrive in their physical locations for the foreseeable future; providing essential destinations that enable, empower and educate; they recognise that the time has come to build interactive and participative virtual locations for residents to connect, collaborate and contribute to the collective intelligence of their own community.

The first stage in their ongoing campaign has been a huge success; increasing the profile of the service, contributing to the professional development of staff and creating a virtual space on SNS Facebook. It has also enabled the service to reach out and communicate with non-traditional library users.

ERLIS ambitions extend well beyond social networking and this has been clarified in the previous section with a series of ‘under development’ initiatives. It is anticipated that the plans outlined in this paper will enable the service to continue to develop into a fully functioning Library 2.0 service. It is also hoped that the experiences of ERLIS will encourage other library services to join them in the global community so that they too can reap the rewards of punching above their own weight.

## Appendix

### ERLIS Facebook Pages:

Barrhead Library

<http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=6825453758>

Busby Library

<http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=6746560731>

Clarkston Library

<http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=9120626202>

Eaglesham Library

<http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=6350843292>

Giffnock Library

<http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=6181644308>

Mearns Library

<http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=8403291630>

Neilston Library

<http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=7659858766>

Netherlee Library

<http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=7743892114>

Thornliebank Library

<http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=6278958818>

Uplawmoor Library

<http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=7699217516>

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