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## **Arlis/ANZ 2.0**

*by the Arlis/ANZ Web Team:*

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We've all been hearing about *Web 2.0* and *Library 2.0* lately. But just what are they all about, and is there anything there that Arlis/ANZ can take advantage of in order to better go about its business? Can there, *should* there, be an Arlis/ANZ 2.0?

As endorsed at the 2006 Arlis/ANZ Annual General Meeting, the Society is planning to review its website, which was first unveiled at the 2004 biennial conference. The site is now three years old, and has been well maintained during that time. However it has not yet been systematically reviewed in terms of content, functionality, and strategic direction. The Arlis/ANZ Web Team will begin a review and redevelopment process during the second half of 2007. The Arlis/ANZ Website *version 'One'* will be redeveloped into Arlis/ANZ Website *version 'Two'*. Although much of that review will concentrate on the structure, look and feel of the site, this will also the perfect opportunity to incorporate the best of Web 2.0 developments. Through incorporating that 'best' in a strategic manner, Arlis/ANZ 2.0 *the website* has powerful potential to contribute toward the strength, cohesion and ongoing development of Arlis/ANZ 2.0 *the Society*.

### **Web 2.0**

A quick scan of the literature shows that Web 2.0 is still in a process of definition, although it is well known that Tim O'Reilly of O'Reilly Media first coined the term in 2004 (Anderson, 2007, p. 6; Tebbutt, 2006, p. 13). However, there is debate as to whether the Web 2.0 'phenomenon' represents a true revolution in the way we use the Web; is simply characterised by particular technologies and services now associated with a new generation of Web users; or is just the Internet as we have always known it, realised to its full potential (Anderson, 2007, p. 5-6).

A *technology* or *service* based description of Web 2.0 features is often defined through the use of technologies such as: blogs; wikis; multimedia sharing services;

content syndication; podcasting; social networking; bookmarking and content tagging services (Anderson, 2007, p. 7).

However, the following *Big Ideas* behind these technologies and services suggested by Paul Anderson (2007, p. 14) might better describe the *attitude* of Web 2.0:

1. Individual production and User Generated Content
2. Harness the power of the crowd
3. Data on an epic scale
4. Architecture of Participation
5. Network Effects
6. Openness

It is possible to be *Web 2.0* without all of the technology, but the specific technologies have a profound ability to enable these *big ideas*. Discussions concerning Web 2.0 tend to focus on changes in behaviour and expectations and the way in which web technologies have brought these changes within reach of everyone (Miller, 2006, para. 10). In times past, online content creation was the province of a few designated people with specialist knowledge and it took *time*. The advent of Web 2.0 has meant anyone can be relatively 'tech savvy'. Performing once complex tasks, such as writing and editing web content, has become so relatively easy that the associated skills are either encouraged, expected or plain assumed in jobs where formal IT degrees are not required - like librarianship. A teach-yourself, get-your-hands-dirty, user-centred ethos is prevailing. Web 2.0 users are potentially *all* of us, and we can be productive, participative and contributing online because it's quick and easy: maximum impact from minimum effort.

## **Library 2.0.**

The *Library 2.0* adaptations of Web 2.0 technologies and attitudes promise to change the way in which libraries offer services to, and interact with, their clients. Essentially Library 2.0 can be described as “the idea of taking library services to the user, rather than the other way round.” It is predominately a *cultural shift*, in the same way that Anderson's *Big Ideas* represent the cultural shift within Web 2.0, but both are underpinned by the same technologies (Tebbutt, 2006, p. 13). Library 2.0 turns the current client service model on its head, taking services to where the user is, in a time and space that suits the user, and empowers the user to collaborate, add content, and interact dynamically with library services and information resources.

There's no doubt that the Web 2.0 technologies and attitudes that have filtered into the library and information world have great potential. While the Library 2.0 literature concentrates on how the client service relationship can be revolutionised, there is clearly a case for these technologies to improve how we work together as professionals. There are good reasons why Arlis/ANZ should look and learn from Library 2.0 developments and the Web 2.0 technologies and attitudes behind them. We are all of us in the Library business, and we are all of us members of a Society

whose current modes of operation, communication and collaboration cannot fail to be enhanced by some judicious extrapolation of Web 2.0 ideas. As a small Society with limited people power and a far flung membership, for ARLIS/ANZ to exploit Web 2.0 tools and Library 2.0 service attitudes makes plain good sense.

## **Arlis/ANZ 2.0**

In his recent article *The New Normal: Association 1.5*, Stephen Abram describes his vision for the next level of development for the Special Libraries Association (SLA) in North America. His vision is uncannily similar to ours, right down to the title of his paper even though this was coincidental. His vision of what he calls the 'new normal' for the SLA is also about where Arlis/ANZ is at: "The New Normal at SLA is that virtually every division and chapter has the foundation of a Web site, a discussion list and an electronic bulletin. Many units have advanced versions of these, and some have even more pilots and exciting innovations to serve their members and audiences" (2007, p. 29).

He challenges the SLA to extend this 'new normal' by capitalising on technologies which build on the Association's core activities of networking, learning, and influence, and which would add to the "strong foundation of the virtual association" (Abram, 2007, p. 29). Replace 'SLA' with 'Arlis/ANZ' in his paper and we almost have a ready-to-roll blueprint for our own vision.

The Arlis/ANZ website is our '*virtual*' chapter. It's a penny-drop moment: *all* Arlis/ANZ members belong to *this* Chapter. But as our virtual Chapter, the personality of the current Arlis/ANZ website is quiet, passive, still - it is a place to store documentation of activities that happen elsewhere. This is a very necessary function of a Society's website, but it is only one amongst many new and emerging possibilities. This virtual Chapter could be so very much more '2.0' in attitude, in use of technology and in service to its members.

## **What We're Doing**

As the literature often points out, the real challenge is how to piece together all these applications and technologies and environments to "engender a useful and effective dynamic" (Dye, 2007, p. 32). Technology for technology's sake never works, there must first exist a need. So, in David Tebbutts's words, we propose *Arlis/ANZ 2.0* as "the idea of taking [Arlis/ANZ] services to the [members], rather than the other way round", in order to create an environment for our Society with the capacity for a *useful and effective dynamic*. (2006, p. 13)

The current reality of Arlis/ANZ is that of a small membership, widely distributed geographically. In some cases Chapters have memberships of just one or two

people. Members seldom get to meet face to face or otherwise connect in any significant number apart from at the biennial conference. *Connection* is important: between members and between members and the Society as an organisation. We need to see each other's faces and footprints, metaphorically speaking. The Society in turn wants to remain connected with its current members and attract new ones. To do this it needs to be clear about its identity, project this strongly and offer opportunities for connection which outstrip the twin problems of geography and critical mass. The Website, as virtual Chapter, can play a key role in achieving this.

Here are the initiatives, both in production and envisioned, that the Arlis/ANZ Web Team are investigating as part of a re-energised website and Arlis/ANZ online presence. Each of these initiatives shows alignment with the six big ideas of *Web 2.0*, and the client service attitude of *Library 2.0*.

### **Welcome to Arlis/ANZ 2.0**

- **Website Hosting:** Migration of the website hosting arrangement from Australian National University to Queensland University of Technology has enabled the Web Team to edit content straight to the Web. We have direct control of content creation and fast turnaround time on website maintenance.
- **Blogs:** A President's Blog enables newsletter-type communication to the Arlis/ANZ membership and beyond, with the ability for any member or interested person to post comments in response. These *weighted conversations* are opportunities for the Executive to engage the membership in the ongoing business of the Society in a informal way. Unlike discussion lists or the one-way information flow of a static website, Blogs encourage discourse (Dye, 2007, p. 34). With open dynamic communication comes transparency and options for interaction and agency for members: "First, blogs allow for storage of our conversations and postings in a way that makes them reusable and re-discoverable. The comments features, when turned on, allow for threaded discussions on a posting as well as for conversations among members beyond e-lists and meetings. The ability to aggregate these into our workflow through Bloglines and other services seamlessly integrates SLA into our daily lives. And, it gets SLA members' viewpoints out into the blogosphere better than the walled gardens of discussion lists and internally oriented bulletins" (Abram, 2007, p. 29).
- **Podcasts and Webcasts:** As an extension of providing content through blogs, the Web Team will also investigate podcasting and webcasting technology. Imagine for a moment that we are talking about our next biennial conference in the following scenario: "What could it mean to record CD quality MP3 files of anything we produce - interviews, panel discussions, meetings, debates, programs? Post an MP3 to your blog and you have a podcast. Simple as that. Upload it to iTunes and you have our viewpoints out there in the world" (Abram, 2007, p. 30). That is a powerful image indeed of maximising the impact of our conference activities.

- **Images and Video:** The Web Team are currently experimenting with an Arlis/ANZ Flickr Group, similar to how this technology is being used by the ArliSNAP organisation. Once the Flickr Group is structured and linked to the site, Arlis/ANZ members can contribute their images of arlis/ANZ activities. We will indeed be able to see each other's faces, and to show our combined personality to the world. There is further potential to incorporate video into the website. Although this is still an envisioned enhancement, it's possible that members could begin to record the Society's activities, such as conference presentations or chapter meetings, and upload the digital footage through sites such as YouTube. Selected video feeds could then be linked into the Arlis/ANZ site. Arlis/ANZ is literally fleshing out its virtual identity.
- **Wikis:** Wikis offer a dynamic website-like medium through which members can create, add, edit, plan and track their activities. "Wikis are a way to get your institutional memory (policies, minutes, programs, ideas, and more) to archive and persist beyond each board or committee membership" (Abram, 2007, p. 29). Wikis bring everyone into the information arena (Dye, 2007, p. 32) in a collaborative environment where all content can be equally owned and managed. Currently the Queensland and New South Wales chapters are experimenting with wikis to plan, organise and record their activities. The Queensland chapter wiki has space for the conference planning and documentation activities which it will be involved in over the next 18 months.
- **Discussion Groups:** Social networking tools like Yahoo or Google Groups have the potential to connect sub-sets of the membership, independent of State-based chapter groupings or the tyrannies of distance. Members can form the Groups that suit them, on their own terms. Less formal and structured a communication tool than a wiki or a blog, discussion groups are best used for generating ideas and providing conversational feedback. Ongoing dialogue is usually short lived as conversation threads pick up and die off. There are no single authors or owners of Group discussions – unlike blogs, where the blog author generates the posts to which others can reply. Discussion is democratic and driven by whoever begins a post, and anyone can enjoy equal participation in the conversation. A discussion group using Yahoo7 Groups has been set up for the Queensland chapter, ready for the conference planning process when ideas need to be quickly tossed around with equal participation of all voices. The Executive Committee would benefit from a discussion group to propose agendas, facilitate meetings and collaboratively record the outcomes and actions.
- **Social Networking and Tagging:** Arlis/ANZ members are specialists. Amongst our membership are experts in the field with knowledge of the issues, resources and practices of a range of Arts Librarianship scenarios. A simple way to share this knowledge and make it accessible to the wider group would be for all members to share the bookmarks in their internet browsers using <http://Del.icio.us>. Del.icio.us is social networking, bookmarking, tagging and information sharing on a global scale. Classification and organisation is a key characteristic, something librarians

are very good at, and it allows users to benefit from the accumulated knowledge, effort and organisational skills of a potentially massive community: *the power of the crowd*. An Arlis/ANZ Del.icio.us community of 'fans' would be a rich collection of collaborative knowledge.

- **All of the above in combination.** Roll all of this together into that useful and effective dynamic and you have a Society that punches above its weight. As Abram says: "It makes what we [the Society] say persist. It widens our voice and increases the voices out there in the debates as we create the future" (2007, p. 30).

## Learning Curves

To manipulate Casey's and Savastinuk's words: Each component by itself is a step toward better serving our [members]; however, it is through the combined implementation of all of these that we can reach [Arlis/ANZ 2.0] (Casey & Savastinuk, 2006, p. 40).

The Arlis/ANZ 2.0 environment is a very exciting world. Embracing the potential of Web 2.0 technologies, as individuals and as a Society, increases our chances for serendipitous connections, for new opportunities and new relationships. The reality is that this potential is being pioneered part-time by volunteers - and by that we mean *every* Arlis/ANZ member who with good grace engages with the new developments as the Web Team bring them into being - bumps and all. Like most of the membership, the members of the Web Team itself are experimenting with these technologies and teaching ourselves. We are championing new technologies, attitudes and services which are, by definition, hinged upon the premise of social, collaborative and communicative *participation*. As with all change, there is risk: if we build it, will they come?

An important part of the Arlis/ANZ Web Team's future business will be finding the right balance of 2.0 tools and services to fit our needs, culture and attitudes. As Dye sums up: "No matter what the Web 2.0 application, success comes down to one critical factor: participation. For user-created content to be at its best there must be an active and involved core community with members who are willing to stay invested..." (Dye, 2007, p. 36). With this caution in the back of our minds, let us now put energy and optimism in the forefront and recall Stephen Abram's encouragement to the Special Libraries Association (Abram, 2007, p. 30): "We can sustain our knowledge and archives; we can put our intramember communication on steroids; we can influence the whole Web ecology. Let's do it."

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## Notes

This paper was written collaboratively using **Google Docs & Spreadsheets**.

In the spirit of *Arlis/ANZ 2.0* the text of this paper will be linked, post publication, to an appropriate interactive forum accessible from the Arlis/ANZ in order to generate discussion and feedback.