

Web 2.0 Tools and Strategies for Archives and Local History Collections. KATE THEIMER. New York: Neal-Schuman, 2010. 246 p. ISBN 978-1-55570-679-1.

Web 2.0 for Librarians and Information Professionals. ELLYSSA KROSKI. New York: Neal-Schuman, 2008. 209 p. ISBN 978-1-55570-614-2.

We live, without question, in an age of social media. The evolution of the World Wide Web has progressed at an astonishing pace over the last decade, changing the way individuals, organizations, and governments interact with one another. Individuals increasingly expect to learn about events and ideas relevant to their lives through social networks rather than through traditional broadcast media. As individuals learn about the potential of the interactive Web, and begin to move into collaborative spaces, they also begin to have new expectations of organizations that were once primarily accessible on location. Libraries and archives, in turn, are discovering the benefits of engaging existing and potential users in the social media spaces where they are already active: if social media brings about a shift in the way individuals are listening, libraries and archives must consider new ways of speaking.

Ellyssa Kroski and Kate Theimer understand the relevance of Web 2.0 for both information organizations and information professionals. In their respec-

tive books, *Web 2.0 for Librarians and Information Professionals* and *Web 2.0 Tools and Strategies for Archives and Local History Collections*, each takes on the challenging task of offering an introduction to Web 2.0 tools and services, and illustrates, through examples, how they can be used to advantage by information professionals and their organizations.

In *Web 2.0 for Librarians and Information Professionals*, Ellyssa Kroski proposes to answer three central questions about Web 2.0 from the perspective of an information professional: What is Web 2.0? Why is it important for me? How can it work for me? Kroski proceeds to answer these questions by introducing and discussing an array of Web 2.0 tools and functionalities. Each chapter in the book functions as a learning resource devoted to one type of application such as blogs, RSS feeds and newsreaders, wikis, social bookmarking, social networking, photo and video sharing, productivity tools, podcasting, and more.

Kroski uses each chapter effectively to provide an overall context for each tool to orient the reader to its particular features. Accompanying diagrams (usually screenshots of appropriate examples) are labelled with features that are annotated point-by-point, making it easy for a novice to locate each feature visually. Each chapter includes a section about how libraries are using the tool under discussion. These sections feature case studies and examples, including relevant Web addresses, reports from experienced professionals about how the tool was implemented at their institution, strategies for starting out, and general comments about the tool's success. Each chapter has one in-depth case study as well as other examples that illustrate the variety of uses to which the tool may be applied. Kroski also provides examples of how information professionals use 2.0 tools outside their organizations to share experiences and expertise. She includes a section outlining the relevant sources or websites offering either access to software or functionality for locating similar applications. At the end of each chapter is a list of best practices for implementing the tool discussed. Kroski's chapters are reader-friendly and easy to navigate, with helpful lists and separate boxes for supplementary content (e.g., definitions); consequently, the work functions well as a reference tool.

In her book, *Web 2.0 Tools and Strategies for Archives and Local History Collections*, Kate Theimer adopts a similar structure but focuses "directly and exclusively on how organizations with archival and historic manuscript collections can use social media to share their activities and collections on the Web" (p. xi). Theimer covers basic Web 2.0 concepts in the first chapter, then devotes each of several subsequent chapters to one major type of Web 2.0 tool, including blogs, podcasts, image-sharing sites, video-sharing sites, micro-blogging, wikis, social networking services, and others. Theimer concludes with chapters on measuring success and management considerations, moving this work beyond quick reference into the category of considered and well-articulated guides.

Theimer's chapters also begin with a basic explanation of each tool and its parts, including screenshots of relevant examples. Her work, however, is more

narrative in style than Kroski's, with examples and references to websites woven into the text, requiring a greater effort on the part of the reader to explore each tool in depth. At times, the placement of text boxes and features interrupts the flow of the text and requires some page flipping to read continuing paragraphs. Despite the problematic layout, Theimer's book contains a wealth of valuable information and inspired ideas for putting Web 2.0 to work for an archival organization. Perhaps the most useful components are the numerous interviews with professionals who have successfully applied Web 2.0 functionalities in their respective organizations. Theimer chooses her examples well and poses relevant questions, allowing the reader to gain insight to the challenges, strategies, resources invested, results, and lessons learned from each implementation.

The subject coverage of both works is quite similar, with a broad overlap of the most common or well-known tools. They do, however, differ in their coverage of lesser-known tools. For example, Theimer gives cursory treatment to RSS, tagging, and social bookmarking, whereas Kroski gives them more expansive treatment as tools in their own right. This difference perhaps speaks to the range of tools that embody participatory technologies and the still-emerging ways of understanding them. Both works focus almost exclusively on *use* of Web 2.0 applications – for general communication or promoting collections – but do not address, to any significant extent, the collection of Web 2.0 content by the institution. Kroski does this peripherally, for example, by suggesting that libraries integrate RSS feeds into their websites to provide dynamic subject guides (pp. 29–30). Theimer advises archival institutions to ensure they preserve the Web 2.0 content they create (pp. 214–16), but is silent on the complexities of including Web 2.0 content from external sources in institutional collection mandates. This is perhaps a significant drawback for institutions that are either considering or already attempting the inclusion of Web 2.0 content in their collections. Professionals looking for advice on these issues will want to look further afield.

Theimer nicely argues that Web 2.0 represents an opportunity for archives to make their collections more accessible and subject to new uses. The author does an excellent job of placing interactive technologies in the context of the development of the Web, showing that they represent the latest stage in an evolution that began to impact archival service to users, even in the Web's earliest phases. Theimer successfully promotes the potential of Web 2.0 to allow greater visibility for archival institutions, increased awareness of their collections, and enhanced perceptions of archives and archivists as contributors to society. At the same time, she takes a thoughtful look at the implications for archival practice – for example, increased availability of born-digital and digitized content on the Web could mean that researchers make use of these materials without investigating their context (p. 222). For a profession that has always placed a premium on provenance and contextual information, what are the implications? Theimer resists providing easy answers, and instead challenges the archival community to find a balance between presenting materials in context and letting documents

stand on their own on the Web. It remains to be seen how archival institutions will continue to grapple with these questions.

Theimer's final two chapters on evaluation and management, and other considerations are very apt for any institution implementing Web 2.0 technologies in large or small ways. She introduces some key considerations to be addressed in the context of individual institutions – including strategic priorities, integration with institutional planning and processes, technical infrastructure, audiences, and more. Theimer succeeds in laying out the essential questions that must be addressed in order to establish a successful program incorporating Web 2.0.

Both works are well-suited for information professionals affiliated with either library or archival institutions. Archival professionals who might be tempted to dismiss Kroski's work as being library-centric risk missing out on an excellent resource. Though the nature of their collections may differ, libraries and archives share many of the same functions – engagement with users and promotion of collections being important among these. Readers of Kroski's work will find an engaging voice, appealing and easy to browse visual layout, and a very comprehensive introduction to the types of technologies in existence. It should be noted that Kroski's work predates Theimer's by two years, leading to a higher likelihood that particular examples of Web applications may no longer be available (the reviewer found this in a small number of cases); however, both authors are careful to focus on broad types of technologies and emerging functionalities, ensuring that their works will be relevant for some time to come. Kroski, in particular, focuses on the *context* or the environment that is created by Web 2.0 tools rather than the institution-specific *content* for which they may act as vehicles, recognizing that it is engagement with a network of contributors that adds real value to Web 2.0 implementations. As Kroski points out, Web 2.0 allows information organizations to: engage in a two-way dialogue with their users; facilitate partnerships among colleagues and institutions, even internationally; and build knowledge communities (pp. 8–9).

Either or both of these works should be considered essential reading for the information professional seeking to use Web 2.0 to increase their organization's profile and relevance online. Those with little or no knowledge of Web 2.0 tools will find either to be an excellent introduction; those familiar with the basics will undoubtedly find there is still much to learn. My own reading of both books introduced me to software choices and possibilities for use that I had not previously considered, though my level of comfort with the functionalities in question was already strong. Archival professionals will benefit particularly from the specific examples and common sense advice offered by Theimer. Both works are refreshing, insightful, and filled with practical ideas to edify any information professional with an interest in the topic.

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