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Learning 2.0: a catalyst for library organisational change

Julia Gross
Edith Cowan University

Lynette Leslie
Edith Cowan University

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Abstract

Purpose

In this paper we describe 'what happened' with round two of the implementation of Learning 2.0 with a large and diverse group of library staff at Edith Cowan University Library during 2007 - 8.

Design/methodology/approach

In a previous paper we reported on our study of the suitability of the 23 Things Learning 2.0 program for a small group of early adopters in the ECU Library. This follow-up paper reports challenges that library management faced when the remaining staff were given the 23 Things Learning 2.0 program. All remaining library staff members were encouraged to undertake the program, but take-up was not strong and only 25% of staff completed the program. At the conclusion of round two of Learning 2.0, all staff were surveyed to find out reasons for completion or non-completion, what types of technologies they needed support with, and how they wished to learn about the emerging/Web 2.0 technologies.

Findings

From the observations and survey responses in this study we found that while Learning 2.0 was a suitable program, some staff required extra time and a more hands-on approach to their workplace learning.

Originality/value

The paper is unique in that it follows up on previous research at the same institution, and reveals new findings.

Article Type: Case study

Keyword(s): Communication technologies; Continuing professional development; University libraries; Learning 2.0; Australia.

Introduction

In 2007 a group of managers at Edith Cowan University Library (ECU) embarked on a pilot project to familiarise staff with Web 2.0 technologies, using the vehicle of the Learning 2.0 program. As the pilot project directors, we described this venture in a previous article (Gross & Leslie 2008) and explained why we embarked on the 23 Things Learning 2.0 program with a group of early adopters. Given the success of the pilot, we were keen to run the program with the rest of the staff in order to continue to build on the learning that was taking place. We had a vested interest in the professional development of our library staff and, along with the University Librarian, wanted to ensure that staff were abreast of enabling new technologies. We believed that Web 2.0 technologies offered potential for changes in the way the library

could communicate with clients and provide services in new and innovative ways. This paper outlines the second phase, describing how we offered the 23 Things Learning 2.0 program to the rest of the 80+ library staff and subsequent developments.

What follows is an account of what we discovered with using a learning program for the larger cohort of staff, firstly with the 23 Things Learning 2.0 program and later with a modified workshop approach. We start with some brief background information about the importance of workplace learning and the 23 Things program, and then move to describe how the ECU Library is adapting to this environment. Next, we reflect on our less-successful experience of using the 23 Things program with a large diverse group, which prompted us to conduct a Web 2.0 training needs survey of all library staff. Finally, we describe the follow-up workshops, which we held in response to the survey results.

Building a learner-centred approach - the Learning 2.0 phenomenon

Web 2.0 is an important development because it has the potential to change the way we work by enabling libraries to push services out to their customers. As Miller(2006) points out in his Talis white paper, *Library 2.0: the challenge of disruptive innovation...* "New technologies and new attitudes make it eminently feasible to break the OPAC [Online Public Access Catalogue] down into a set of functional components...available for inclusion in almost *any* page on the web..." However, the adoption of Web 2.0 developments within key library platforms requires library staff to become familiar with these new technologies.

23 Things Learning 2.0 is a program designed to raise awareness of the new technologies and the impact on information delivery. The program builds the capacity for professionals to learn within the workplace, a key factor in changing work environments, as noted by Sally Sambrook(2005):

The capacity to learn, individually and collectively, is deemed a critical factor in the ability to adapt to changing work environments, and a key factor in the pursuit of organizational survival. (Sambrook 2005)

Her comments are reiterated by Jake Reynolds, the author of the report *Helping People Learn*, and quoted by Martyn Sloman (2004) when he discusses the need for the organisation to adapt in order to stay agile in the face of uncertainty:

...the capacity to adapt is the greatest gift of learning, allowing both the learner and organisation to stay agile in the face of uncertainty, whereas other outcomes of learning, such as knowledge and skills, tend to have specific applications and a shorter shelf life. (Sloman 2004)

Many libraries are adapting to the changes afforded by Web 2.0 and adopting learning programs that facilitate a 'capacity to learn' approach to staff learning. These learning programs tend to be explorative in nature rather than prescriptive, allowing staff to explore the learning and work collaboratively to assist the organisation in adapting to the emerging technologies.

The original 23 Things Learning 2.0 program was developed in August 2006 by Helene Blowers, Public Services Technology Director at the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County (PLCMC) in North Carolina. Blowers' description of the *23 Things Program* illustrates a 'capacity to learn' approach to staff learning, which she was striving to achieve at PLCMC.

The breakthrough of the program itself is that it did not involve one bit of classroom or workshop instruction nor were any handouts or cheat sheets designed to support the exercises. Instead, it was purely built upon the notion of lifelong learning and encouraging self-discovery and fun. And the biggest plus to it all was that the program itself was built using the very same free tools that it encouraged staff members to explore. (Blowers 2006)

ECU Library embarked on the 23 Things Learning 2.0 in 2007. By 2008 there was a worldwide take up of this learning program, with many libraries in Europe and the U.S. adapting Learning 2.0 for their needs (Aagaard 2008; Stephens 2008). Thus Learning 2.0 is a worldwide phenomenon of which ECU Library is a part. Following the success of the pilot at ECU Library and because of the need to continue developing Web 2.0 capabilities in library staff, we decided to run the 23 Things program with the wider group of 79 staff in 2007 - 8, which constitutes part two of the ECU Library's Learning 2.0 story.

23 Things Learning 2.0 Program (round two)

At a staff meeting the University Librarian encouraged all of the remaining staff to join the 23 Things program, but completion was not made compulsory and no incentives were offered. The project managers detailed an outline of requirements of the program and discussed possible scenarios that may assist supervisors to support staff in the work area, including the option to work independently or to work in groups for an allocated time slot each week. It was mentioned that the early adopters were available as mentors. From here, it was left to each individual to plan her/his learning strategies and for the local work area to determine outcomes. Staff signalled their commencement of the program by starting exercise one, which required setting up their own blog.

Web 2.0 was a relatively new concept for most of these staff; they were novices in using these technologies and were generally not used to explorative learning in the workplace. The group members also had varying levels of library experience.

What we learned from observation

As all library staff members were expected to complete the learning tasks in work time, there was some concern from supervisors that the staff might use these technologies for personal reasons and not work. These fears were somewhat allayed after the project leaders explained the importance of play and experimentation in learning. Some supervisors rostered a set amount of time for those in their section to undertake these activities.

The completion rate for this second group was much lower than for the early adopters. Of the 79 remaining staff, 36 commenced Learning 2.0 in the 2nd round; however, only 15 completed the program. This is not inconsistent with other findings: Carole A. George (2008) cites Geoffrey A. Moore's *Crossing the Chasm* where he categorises five groups of users who can be identified when new technologies are implemented: the "innovators" (very small group), "early adopters" (small group), "early majority" (about one third), "late majority" (about one third) and "laggards" (small group). The experience at our library was within this range.

The staff members who completed the second round of the Learning 2.0 program followed similar behavioural trends to the early adopters, working through the program in the self-paced mode and getting help when needed from others in the program or from the early adopters. Some staff found creating a blog quite an achievement, whilst others seemed to take the new technologies in their stride and enhanced their blogs with all sorts of add-ins, including favourite music and jokes. Some members of staff attended group training sessions to get their blog up and running, which was useful as the blog was so integral to the program.

The actual blogs provided insight into what these technologies meant to many of the participants. Here are some examples of participants' comments on their blogs:

Thankfully, the painful process of creating a blog was rather like a visit to the dentist - the thought was worse than the actual process. Tackling it as a small group was of great assistance and a journey of technological discovery.

Well, here it is... my first blog posting. Like some have said, I found the hardest part was choosing my blog name and the template!

This is my first contribution to my blog. I have just finished setting up my various accounts to get started and so far it has been easier than I expected.

*I have a picture!!!! Yes, I can do it; it's just a case of learning as you go...
I now have some understanding of RSS feeds and bloglines...it is good to know what is out there if the need arises: Had no idea of it before.*

*I've learned that Web 2.0 is constantly evolving. Some are even talking about Web 3.0...
Mentoring is also very important for people who are put off by having to learn new technologies...*

It would be a good idea for the library to generate a blog containing current information on new services and resources.

I personally easily absorb information when I listen or see. I like the idea of using podcasts & video clips in conjunction with written online subject guides for library instruction.

As much as I tried resisting doing this, I found I actually really enjoyed it. Although it was a bit rushed in the end, I feel that I have learnt a lot.

(Gross & Leslie 2007b)

As the following comments illustrate, the social networking afforded by the technologies in the program provided opportunities for staff to collaborate and get to know each other better.

I think the most interesting thing I have learnt is how my fellow staff members reacted to the experiences. As I am new to ECU it was a good opportunity to get a few insights into how people work

We also found that by teamwork and joint effort we were able to share ideas and further strengthen our understanding of Web 2.0. We discovered a common thread of these technologies which is the ability for users to generate information and share it with others.

23 Things has revealed how staff can work together to accept new technological challenges and in the process developed a sense of team spirit. There was definitely something new to talk about and I looked forward to blogging and reading/writing comments.

(Gross & Leslie 2007b)

The blogs provided staff with the opportunity to draw on their experience, an important *adult learning principle* (Knowles 1984). Some blogs revealed the author's photography or design skills and all authors were happy to choose the graphics to adorn them (Gross & Leslie 2007a).

Assessing Learning 2.0 at ECU Library

At the end of 2007, after two rounds of the Learning 2.0 program, we were chastened with the realisation that not all staff had completed or even started the program. We had 21 staff who had started but not completed the program, and another 43 who had not started at all.

| ECU Library staff participation and completions for Learning 2.0 Program | | | | |
|---|---|----------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| Total staff numbers -- participants | Pilot group of Early Adopters Round 1 completions | Second group Round 2 completions | Staff participants' completions after 2 rounds | Staff non-completions after 2 rounds |
| 43 | 7 | 15 | 22 | 21 |
| 100% | 16% | 35% | 51% | 49% |

Before hastening to provide further learning opportunities in this area, we wanted to pause and reflect on why were some enthused enough to complete 23 Things, and what were the major impediments to participating in this type of learning program. We also wanted to establish what type of Web 2.0 technologies staff were now familiar with.

So, in May 2008, we decided to conduct a survey of all library staff to ask their views. Altogether, 43 staff answered the survey, which was over a 50% survey response rate.

The survey consisted of 8 questions See Appendix 1

What we learned from the survey

In the following sections we discuss the findings from the survey, identify the reasons for staff members not completing the program, their preferred ways of receiving this type of knowledge, and the existing skills they now had.

The four most frequent reasons given by the group for not completing the Learning 2.0 program were: 1) lack of time; 2) other priorities; 3) relevance; and 4) being a part-time staff member.

Reasons for not completing the 23 Things Learning 2.0 Program

| Library staff: Reasons for non-completion | |
|---|-----|
| Lack of Time | 23% |
| Work part time | 18% |
| Relevance, lack of | 9% |
| Other priorities | 9% |
| Already knew enough | 7% |
| On leave, not on staff | 7% |

Some of the comments staff gave for NOT starting or completing were:

- *personal motivation*
- *had problems with my browser*
- *overwhelming workload, began a new position*
- *more pressing priorities, on leave*
- *hard to be enthusiastic about these things unless you have a need*
- *can't see myself fitting it into 2 days a week*
- *it was not encouraged at this level (library assistant)*
- *it does not seem to be part of our current work flow*

Overall, the key factor given for not completing the program was 'not enough time'. This is consistent with findings from other surveys. When Kay Baldwin-Evans (2004) conducted research into the barriers to e-learning, she found that 'lack of time' was the greatest barrier, cited by 50 percent of respondents, followed by 'lack of self motivation', cited by 41 percent and 'lack of management support' was mentioned by one third of respondents.

Library staff resistance to learning about new and emerging technologies has been identified in the library professional development literature as a common problem. The resistance has been investigated by Kathryn Greenhill on her emerging technologies blog, *Librarians Matter* (Greenhill 2008) in which she notes a common objection is that staff cannot see the relevance of Web 2.0 to their daily work. Greenhill outlines some strategies to motivate staff to find time for their learning, such as advising staff to work with a learning buddy, to 'phone a friend' and/or to set aside learning time each day (Greenhill 2009).

IBM's report, *Achieving tangible business benefits with social computing*, notes that the demographics of the workforce today, with more older employees, may present an obstacle to widespread adoption of Web 2.0 and social software applications. (IBM 2007). This could be seen as a factor in libraries, where the younger demographic is in the minority and older employees may lack confidence in using new technologies.

Sally Sambrook (2005) in her paper *Research study 1: Factors influencing learning in learner oriented organizations* notes a number of contextual factors influencing learning at work, among them, "the skills, attitudes and motivations of managers and learners".

The importance of management's approach as a motivator of change is also identified by McAfee when he notes:

an organization's leaders need to be both aware of today's technology-enabled opportunities to improve collaborative work and be interested in exploring them ... hands on signals from the top demonstrate desired behaviours and actions, that E2.0 [Enterprise 2.0] is for everyone, not just the rank and file. (McAfee 2009)

In our library, Web 2.0 was embedded in the library plan and this emphasised its importance to all staff. However, whilst we had top level manager support for the Learning 2.0 project, with these managers attending sessions and introducing the programs, it became evident there was an issue with the type of support required at the immediate line manager/supervisor level.

The key reasons for non-completion of the ECU Learning 2.0 program given by the learners were relevance, lack of time and other priorities. However, as Web 2.0 was becoming more pervasive in the workplace a change was beginning to occur in the motivations of the learners and their line managers. By early 2008, after the second round of training, some potential learners asked for training as part of their work planning, and line managers were enquiring when the next round of Learning 2.0 was happening.

The literature is very clear about the need to provide the time for learning within the daily workflow in order for it to make a difference. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2005) notes that "Learning must be embedded in day-to-day activity if it is to make a long term difference." If the Web 2.0 learning is embedded in the daily routine, it is given the same status as other tasks that need to be done and the relevance of the learning becomes more obvious. For example RSS could be investigated in the light of showing academic staff how to maintain current awareness. Then the learning is seen as relevant and the lack of time becomes less of an issue as it is a necessary, even rostered task, which redresses two of the key reasons staff gave for not completing the program.

In her survey *Employees and e-learning: what do end users think?* Kay Baldwin-Evans (2004) has very positive comments about staff motivation:

The interesting point to note regarding the motivation to learn is that this research suggests that even if we exclude this 20 per cent (compulsory training), the majority of employees *want to improve* the way in which they do their jobs and develop personal skill sets. (Baldwin-Evans 2004)

This is consistent with our own findings. Library staff members at ECU have good access to training within the university and participation is encouraged through regular work planning sessions. Notwithstanding, as new concepts arise, such as Web 2.0, it takes time for them to become accepted. Understandably, staff may not find Learning 2.0 technologies immediately relevant and, therefore, the training may not seem relevant. However, once staff began to see Web 2.0 as having a presence in the day-to-day operation of their workplace, they became interested in knowing more.

| Edith Cowan University questionnaire: Library 2.0 training needs at ECU Library | | | |
|---|-----------------|--------------------|----------|
| Preferred methods for continuing the learning | | | |
| Hands-on | Yearly/semester | Revamp the program | Set-time |
| 60.5% | 48.8% | 44.2% | 41.9% |

The majority of staff (60.5%) stated that they preferred hands-on training workshops in specific technologies, and others (48.8%) felt that annual or semester staff training days were a preferred option. As most of the 43 survey respondents had completed the learning program, the desire for hands-on may reflect their perceived need to develop a particular technology further. From the comments staff made regarding the nature and format of the program, we began to form a plan for a future direction. See a selection of comments below:

"The program seemed very long and time-intensive. Maybe breaking it up into smaller sessions/workshops would make it easier to allocate the time needed"

"If training could be offered in short segments, one topic at a time, then anyone who had a problem with that particular topic could attend. ...I think it may save time in the long run as people sometimes spend quite a lot of time trying to understand something that could be explained in a few minutes"

"Many staff needed some form of instruction and lots of pep talks to keep them going."

"I think a series of workshops would be great.....it would take you away from your work environment and the temptation to 'put it off' because I'm too busy"

ECU Library questionnaire: Library 2.0 training needs at ECU Library 2008

Familiarity with Web 2.0 technologies

The survey also identified which Web 2.0 technologies staff were familiar with. These technologies are listed in the following table.

| ECU Library questionnaire: Web 2.0 skills familiarity | |
|--|-------|
| Blogs | 44.2% |
| RSS | 27.9% |
| Image hosting | 25.6% |
| Podcasting | 23.3% |
| Social networking | 23.3% |
| Wiki | 18.6% |

The greater familiarity of blog technology may have come from reading others' blogs and/or having a blog of their own. ECU Library now has a blog for its news, which elicits feedback from our student client base, thus demonstrating to library staff a clear outcome of the Learning 2.0 program.

Wiki technology was the least familiar one, even though it was used to register staff attendance at the workshops. The relatively high listing for social networking probably arises from staff using Facebook and other popular social networking sites. The responses to this question gave us a clear picture of the skills now in the workplace, and this was useful for planning future training.

Where to next?

Whilst the results of the staff survey gave us some useful ideas about how to modify an ongoing approach to Learning 2.0, the literature also provided some useful insights to help confirm the importance of social learning and the benefits of setting up communities of practice (Brown & Adler 2008; Brown & Duguid 2000; IBM 2007).

Andrew McAfee (McAfee) advises the need for "steady and patient evangelising" to maintain interest in Web 2.0 across a large and diverse organisation such as an academic library.

Brown and Duguid (2000) also reminds us that learning needs to be relevant.

Learning is usually treated as a supply-side matter, thought to follow teaching, training, or information delivery. But learning is much more demand driven. People learn in response to need. When people cannot see the need for what's being taught, they ignore it, reject it, or fail to assimilate it in any meaningful way. Conversely, when they have a need, then if the resources for learning are available, people learn effectively and quickly. (Brown & Duguid 2000)

It has taken time for our staff to see the relevance of the Learning 2.0, but over time tangible outcomes have provided the link to encourage a community of practice to develop.

A new approach

The staff survey indicated that we had partially achieved our original aim to raise the staff awareness of Web 2.0 technologies, and it provided useful information for designing an ongoing program that would maintain and enhance this awareness.

Given that respondents cited 'lack of time' as a key issue in finishing the program, we decided to take a different approach to providing learning. To most of the staff, Web 2.0 and related technologies were now part of the language, even if the learning program had not been completed. We had built a critical mass. An alternative, less-intensive approach was needed for those who hadn't completed the program and wanted to engage with the topic, or wanted to refresh their skills.

Using the survey results as a guide, we then offered two half-day learning sessions several months later, targeting coaching on a specific technology for the first hour and then a series of 15-minute 'show and tell' presentations for the second half of the program. The early adopters were invited to help run the program, giving them the opportunity to focus and summarise what they had been working on. The short time commitment (2 half days) to the workshops addressed the 'lack of time' issue raised in the survey.

Two technologies were targeted for the instructor-led hands-on session: setting up your blog, and using RSS feeds (to alert a user to new material on a topic in a blog or electronic journal). And since our group knew least about wikis, we used a wiki to enrol for the sessions and as a tool for organising who would bring 'eats' for morning tea.

For the second half of the session we had a number of areas to draw upon as Web 2.0 was now integrated with the library catalogue and databases and early adopters were involved in implementing some of the new technologies. We added two sessions, one on 'the wisdom of the crowd' and another on Creative Commons, to stimulate some thought about issues related to Web 2.0.

What we learned

Feedback and evaluations from the half-day program in July 2008 were positive. The atmosphere was lively, stimulating and collaborative. Staff liked seeing 'real' library achievements. A mark of success was the overheard comment: "what we need to do now is to go back to our section and discuss how we can use these things". Line managers are now asking when the next Web 2.0 workshops will be held.

Between formal learning sessions, we continue to 'evangelise', by emailing library staff about useful Web 2.0 technologies - i.e. useful information about new library initiatives picked up from a Ning or a blog. Examples of how the technology is being used by our clients is also shared -- for example, when an academic staff member picks up a 'tweet' through a feed from the library blog to Twitter, generating a reference question, this is shared as it demonstrates a direct example of how the service is changing for our clients.

Over the last two and a half years members of the original pilot group and others have been active in setting up the Library Blog, a library Facebook page, a Flickr site, a library presence on Twitter and subject team Delicious pages. We have also produced orientation videos for loading to YouTube, and run sessions for staff and students on using RSS, Google Reader and iGoogle. Some of the library staff maintain their own blogs and also monitor blogs and Twitter for professional development. Adoption of Web 2.0 technologies was initially a very much 'toe in the water' approach for libraries, as it was a new way of looking at the service. Now most libraries are moving into the implementation stage where "usage spreads virally across the organization attracting participants, as opposed to mandatory participation" (IBM 2007).

Conclusion

We feel we are making progress on the Web 2.0 learning journey with our staff. Blowers introduced the Learning 2.0 in 2006 with the aim of developing an online program to reach a large, widely dispersed group of staff at the Public Library of Charlotte & Mecklenburg County. We had the same concerns and 23 Things provided us with the opportunity to reach a critical mass of staff and raise awareness of Web 2.0 technologies. However, we have found that to maintain current awareness of new technologies, we need to incorporate a wider choice of options when giving staff opportunities for workplace learning. For example, some staff prefer a hands-on approach in a workshop situation, others seek mentored on-the-job learning with leaders guiding the group.

In our pursuit of effective staff training and development at ECU we are reminded of this advice from Martyn Sloman (2004) : "Whatever vehicle or intervention is used to promote learning, from courses to coaching, success will only be achieved if the learner wishes to co-operate. Encouraging learning is a challenging and complex business". We have found that getting staff to embrace new technologies has been tantamount to effecting organisational change! Looking back over the two and a half year learning journey we have more than achieved our original goal of raising staff awareness of Web 2.0. We are now implementing Web 2.0 in a way that is reaching our clients and eliciting the two way dialogue that these participatory technologies promise.

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Appendix 1

ECU Library Questionnaire

Library 2.0 Training Needs at ECU Library 2008

The ECU Library Learning 2.0 program aims to contribute to staff understanding of Library 2.0. In this program staff are exposed to some new web 2.0 technologies such as: blogs, wikis, RSS, social networking, podcasting and image hosting. The program was offered twice during 2007: in semester 1 over 9 weeks, and in semester 2 over 13 weeks. The delivery was online via the ECU Library Learning 2.0 Blog: <http://eculibrarylearning.blogspot.com/>

Your responses to this questionnaire will help the Library determine how Learning 2.0 or a similar Library 2.0 program can or should be offered to library staff in the future.

Your participation in completing this questionnaire would be most appreciated.

1. Did you **start** the ECU Library Learning 2.0 in 2007?

2. Did you **complete** ECU Library Learning 2.0 in 2007?

3. If you did **not complete**, or if you did **not start** ECU Library Learning 2.0 in 2007 what was your reason? (please circle any of the below that apply, or write down the letter that covers your response)

A. I did not have enough time to start or complete it

B. I had other training priorities in 2007

- C. I did not think it was relevant to my job
- D. I already knew enough about Web 2.0 technologies
- E. I was not on ECU staff then, or was on leave
- F. I work part time, so not enough time to do it
- G. Add any other comments below

.....

4. What other ways could the ECU library assist staff to gain skills in Web 2.0 and new web technologies? (please circle any of the below that apply, or write down the letter that covers your response)

- A. Offer hands on training workshops in specific technologies
- B. Assign a set time each week to enable staff participation in Learning 2.0
- C. Offer yearly or semester staff training days
- D. Set up an ECU library new technologies group
- E. Offer a revamped ECU Library Learning 2.0 again
- F. Offer staff incentives to complete a Learning 2.0 program
- G. Add any other suggestions or comments below

.....

5. If you already have Web 2.0 skills what technologies are you most comfortable with?

- A. blogs
- B. wikis
- C. RSS
- D. social networking (eg Facebook)
- E. podcasting
- F. image hosting (eg Flickr, YouTube)
- G. Any others, please list below

(please circle any that apply, or write down the letter that covers your response).

6. Are you **using** Web 2.0 technologies in your work, studies or outside work? Indicate which technologies you are using at work and what you are using them for.

7. What **section** of the library do you work in?

Library Services

Library Collections and Access

8. What is your **job position**?

Senior librarian, librarian, library technician, library assistant