

# Web 2.0

## learning and teaching

Over the last few years, our relationship with the Web has been changing dramatically. Simple new web technologies like blogs, wikis, podcasts, flickr, social bookmarking, podcasts, etc. (see glossary) are allowing us to not only create content like text, audio and video more easily but are allowing us to publish and share content on the Web with little effort.

The first generation of Internet services were static or read only sites where information could be accessed, searched and retrieved. Second generation Internet services – referred to as Web 2.0 or social networking software – allow users to read and write. Web 2.0 has radicalised the way we contribute and consume information making it possible for individuals to become experts by contributing and building communities of practice.

Web 2.0 technology is having a profound impact in classrooms with unimaginable opportunities to explore, create, innovate, collaborate and participate. Learners are “accessing” people and knowledge in ways that encourage creative and reflective practices that extend beyond the classroom.

### The social web: learning together

Understanding our 21st century students and their needs is no easy task. Will Richardson (2006) explains that whether it is blogs or wikis or RSS, all roads now point to a Web where little is done in isolation and all things are collaborative and social in nature. His vision for K-12 education fires up the imagination.

“More important will be the response of classrooms teachers, for the classroom of the Read/Write Web will in many ways require a redefinition of what it means to teach.”

Two prominent collaborative tools being used in education are wikis and blogs.

Blogs (weblogs) are a very popular Web 2.0 tool and are used in education as a way of sharing or managing information and promoting literacy and learning. Blogs can be used to showcase student work, collaborate, demonstrate analysis and synthesis, and develop peer involvement. They also allow students to self-publish, present ideas, record events, promote podcasts, offer commentary, share images and much more.

Blogs have proven to be a highly effective medium for fostering a professional learning community and a personal learning environment. The *Weekly News* blog <http://parabib-blog.blogspot.com> was created to provide information and ideas about learning and teaching in a knowledge society.

Wikis are also a popular and a useful way of sharing and creating knowledge or managing a project. Wiki software



allows students to easily upload content to the Internet, with the important addition that it is then editable by other readers.

The best known wiki of all, *wikipedia*, is an online encyclopaedia which illustrates the power of collaboration.

### RSS – coming, ready or not

RSS is an acronym for *Really Simple Syndication* and lets the student or teacher control what content they need in their personal learning space.

RSS has also made it possible to podcast (broadcast) audio to wider and more specialised interest groups. Podcasts can be downloaded to personal computers or mp3 players for entertainment or information. Students are beginning to produce and share podcasts of their work to peers.

One of the easiest ways to get started with RSS is to create a teacher blog and have students subscribe to the daily updates. Parents can also join in the blog community and keep up-to-date with the ‘doing and thinking’ of their child’s learning spaces.

### Fast forward – facts and flicks

Social bookmarking allows learners and teachers to share their Internet ‘bookmarks’ or ‘favourites’ on a public website rather than searching bookmarks stored on a personal computer. Users have the option of adding tags (keywords) to help define the information and improve the organisation and sharing of the information. While different social bookmarking sites encourage different uses, social bookmarking opens the door to new ways of organising information and categorising resources.

Pictures and images are also a vital part of communication. Learners have easy access to a pool of images or a place to store images for projects, school excursions and school events in Flickr. Students can also share and download video through YouTube and other media-sharing sites.

### What does this all mean?

We are witnessing demand for new ways of learning and teaching in and outside school, driven by new forms of Web 2.0 technologies.

The learning agenda in today’s world is totally new, totally engaging, totally global and totally personal. As educators, we need to ask whether what we teach and how we teach is truly engaging our ‘digitally native’ students.

We are embarking on a significant journey of challenge and change together, affirming our commitment to an authentic Catholic education for today’s learners.



**Web 2.0** Referring to social networking software tools that allow users to form online communities. It can be one-to-one (emails, instant messaging), one-to-many (blogs) or many-to-many (wikis, forums).

**Weblog** A website that allows an author(s) to instantly publish text, audio and images.

> <http://www.blogger.com>

> <http://wordpress.org>

**Podcast** Audio content that is easily created distributed and downloaded. It makes use of Really Simple Syndication (RSS) by sending audio directly to an iPod or mp3 player.

**RSS** Really Simple Syndication. This allows users to subscribe to sites that offer feeds of new content.

**RSS Reader** Uses software called an 'aggregator' that collects and stores new content from sites selected by the user.

> [www.bloglines.com](http://www.bloglines.com)

**Wikis** Online database that can be structured, created and edited by anyone. Most famous wiki is the encyclopaedia "wikipedia".

> <http://en.wikipedia.org>

**Social bookmarking** Allows users to display and share their lists of bookmarked webpages. Content is organised by "tags" that are defined by user.

> <http://del.icio.us>

> <http://www.furl.net>

**MySpace** An interactive website allowing user to build a personal profile, share music, blogs and videos.

> [www.myspace.com](http://www.myspace.com)

**Flickr and YouTube** Allows user to upload, view and share photos and/or videoclips for free.

> [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com)

> [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

## Web 2.0 around our schools

*Marita Thomson, Teacher Librarian, Patrician Brothers College, Blacktown*

As well as Book Bites (<http://www.bookbite.blogspot.com>), I have run a blog for quick links for the last two years. It is linked from the library home page and can be updated at short notice or (hopefully) be part of a more formal backup to programmed work. It has been very useful – I can get to it even when the school web page is down. It is also easy to update topics that recur. It is pretty plain but I have lately started adding pics from Flickr.

Latest Links: [www.patslib.blogspot.com/](http://www.patslib.blogspot.com/)

*Danuta Paton, Director of Studies (and Extension English teacher), Patrician Brothers College, Blacktown*

They blogged in English! Some examples:

<http://lightsama.blogspot.com>

<http://elmaestro1989.blogspot.com>

<http://necromancer99.blogspot.com>

<http://speculativefictionstudy.blogspot.com>

*Jan Radford, Teacher Librarian, Delany College, Granville*

"Del.icio.us is a resource sharing time saver! I don't know how we ever did without it. Teachers and staff are working collaboratively here providing students with annotated bookmarks for their tasks. Tom Callan (Year 8 Science teacher) and I used del.icio.us to provide the students with information needed for their assessment on the Sydney water shortage.



Tom said that all the students actively engaged in learning and found the structured tags easy to use. He was particularly pleased because the class, which includes students with a wide range of abilities, were all very positive in using the del.icio.us links and produced sound and thoughtful work."

[www.delaneylibrary.com](http://www.delaneylibrary.com) with links to Delaney library  
Del.icio.us <http://del.icio.us/delany> library  
blog <http://delanylibrary.blogspot.com>  
With feedback on MySpace at <http://delanylibrary.blogspot.com/2006/09are-you-myspace-member.html>

*Francis Manning, Teacher Librarian, Holy Family, Luddenham*

My library is [www.infozone2.blogspot.com](http://www.infozone2.blogspot.com)  
Year 5 book review site is [www.yr5read.blogspot.com](http://www.yr5read.blogspot.com)  
We also have a Year 1 blog at [www.yr1hfs.blogspot.com](http://www.yr1hfs.blogspot.com)  
A boys ed blog we've just started is [www.boysedhfs.blogspot.com](http://www.boysedhfs.blogspot.com)  
Our boys' ed wiki is [http:// boysedhfs.wikispaces.com/](http://boysedhfs.wikispaces.com/)

*Mary Anne Cartwright, Acting Religious Education Coordinator,*

Holy Cross Primary, Glenwood  
Sharing our Story <http://sosholycross.blogspot.com/>  
Holy Cross Book Worms  
<http://holycrossbookworms.blogspot.com/>