

## **The New World Wide Web?**

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It looks like it is going to be one of those days! The test you created last night for your Grade 6 Socials Studies class on your home computer, and e-mailed to yourself at school, somehow managed to be corrupted and will not open. No problem. Since you created it online using [Google Docs and Spreadsheets](#) getting it is as easy as logging into your online account, opening the file and printing from the web.

Now that the crisis has passed, you decide you want to listen to music while you take care of the rest of your tasks before school begins. Pointing your browser to [Last.fm](#), you enter the category of music you want to listen to and it randomly selects music from that category to play, making suggestions as to albums you might be interested in.

While on your [Netvibes](#) homepage that opened when you started your browser, you notice a recent post to your homepage from the [BC EdOnline RSS newsfeed](#) you subscribe to, announcing the next [Open Weekend](#) sponsored by [KnowSchools](#) will be an [open source](#) tools potluck where participants will share the “free” tools they regularly use as teachers. This is great! You immediately open your [EasyJournal blog](#) to post this news. Some of your friends have subscribed to your blog, so this new announcement will be immediately sent out to them because they share your interest in finding new technological tools to enhance their teaching. As you type the message to post you remember that from the last potluck you participated in someone posted a link to [Del.icio.us](#), bookmarking several of the resources from that discussion. You decide to include this information in your post as well.

Just before logging off you decide to check [Wikipedia](#) because last night, while making your Socials test, you noticed a content error in one of the articles you accessed on the site. You submitted a correction to the moderator before you left the site, and now, sure enough, the article has been updated.

Better check your e-mail to see if anything important has come in. [G-Mail](#) is the client you use most of the time because you always have access to it wherever you are. There is a response from Alan’s father. He is thanking you for sending him the link information to [Engrade](#), the free online gradebook you are using. He is now able to keep track of Alan’s progress anytime he wants.

Just below that e-mail is one from Jenny. She and her family are on an extended family vacation. She is inviting you to an [Illuminate](#) session in her [V-Room](#) at 4:00pm because she is needing help with one of the Math questions you posted on the school’s website provided by [Simple Updates](#) free through the NAD. You have your [Math Course](#) posted online using [Moodle](#) as the learning management system so students missing school days can go online and access the resources and assignments. That reminds you that you need to use [RubiStar](#) to create the rubric you want to post for the student’s participation in the forum you have set up for the Grade 9 Science discussion.

Quickly, you click over to your [Backpack](#) account. This is where you keep your to-do lists, notes and personal schedule online, so your life is organized. The live [podcast](#) you want to participate in on Education in Rural BC will be over at 3:45pm. Meeting with Jenny online will not be a problem. Using the [Elluminate](#) classroom allows you and the student to talk directly to each other and with its integrated whiteboard you are able to visually show her the steps as you work through the math problem with her. Since you do have the time you schedule the meeting with Jenny, and set a reminder to be texted to your cell phone to notify you ten minutes before the online meeting so you won't forget.

Just before you log off you groan because there are also 6 new requests from people you went to school with asking if you want to be their friend. Maybe joining [FaceBook](#) wasn't such a great idea because it is turning out to be a bit more work than you anticipated, but getting in touch with these people from your past has been fun. Oh well.

A new e-mail message has just arrived. It is from one of the students in a group that has been collaborating together on a project in English 8. The four students decided to research the life of Shakespeare and are annotating a [Google Earth](#) map with the information they have found. Now that they have finished it, they have sent you the file link so you can open it in Google Earth.

The students are just coming in. It looks like you'll have to upload those photos to [Flickr](#) of the class field trip to the zoo later. Now, what was the password for that account? It doesn't matter if you can't remember because you stored it online at [PasswordSafe](#). You pull up that Bible lesson plan you found on [Circle](#) which you prepared to use for first period. Just another average day on the job as a teacher.

Welcome to Web 2.0!

Do you remember the push the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada Office of Education made to get us to develop those technology plans for our schools? I remember Mike Lekic speaking to us and sharing the PowerPoint presentations about how we were doing in our usage of technology. Remember the analogy of the garage? To begin with we were in the car with the engine running, then we were just pulling out of the garage. Right now I feel like we have made it to the 401 (busiest highway in Canada), have gotten to the airport and have boarded the supersonic jet. That's the difference between the Web as we knew it then and Web 2.0

Web 2.0 is a term used to describe the emerging World Wide Web as it is being used today. Originally the web was very static. Web designers and specialists were needed to write the code for web pages. These pages were put on the web to share information, and we went to these pages to retrieve that information. There was little two-way communication or input from the people utilizing the web.

The difference is not that the Web is new, but rather that the existing technologies are being used in new and innovative ways. Think about the steam engine. In the First Century it was developed by Heron of Alexandria, and its first use? It was a toy for the

entertainment of the aristocracy. It was this simple “toy” that fueled the development of the Industrial Revolution. How? It was an existing technology that was applied in new and innovative ways. So it is with the World Wide Web.<sup>1</sup>

The key words to describe the revitalized Web would be collaboration, democracy, and participation.<sup>12</sup> The static information, prepared by professional webpage designers have given way to amateur-produced interactive webpages that anyone can design to get their information out to the world. The web has changed. To illustrate this, take a few moments to view these two video clips from another Web 2.0 phenomenon, [You Tube](#):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6gmP4nk0EOE>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nsa5ZTRJQ5w>.

These are examples of what is being considered one of the major themes of Web 2.0: **The Read/Write Web**. In this theme, the web is viewed as a two-way medium, so that people are not only readers, but also the writers. Social software that allows communication and collaboration between two or more people is the driving force behind the development of this theme. As people are able to communicate, evaluate, share, comment and respond, we see the two-dimensional Web being transformed into a multi-dimensional experience where people are not only receiving information, but are also participating by contributing and sharing their own experiences.<sup>18</sup>

In this case we see a movement to providing a service rather than providing a product. It is much like thinking of providing infoware rather than software. This new view of the web encourages participation by asking for their comments, views and reviews of what they see and what their personal experience has been. This adds naturally to the notion of collective intelligence as it brings the thoughts and ideas of many people together on a given subject and we are able to synthesize this information in reviewing the summary of their responses. At a glance this helps us to make judgments on popularity, ranking and seeing the development of [folksonomies](#). It allows users to re-use and re-mix the information in ways that are pertinent and meet the immediate needs of the user. In this way the idea of customer self-service comes to the forefront because the user is able to browse and select what they think is important and want to use. But contrary to this autonomy, there is also the feeling of community through active membership and interaction with groups of people around the world while at the same time, there is a sense of ownership because of the contribution the user is making.<sup>11</sup>

Here is the second major theme being developed that identifies Web 2.0: **The Web as Platform**. In this theme we see the Web being used as a programming platform that developers use to create software programs. In this way, the programs are no longer run on the local computer, but actually are on the Web. What we see happening is the movement of the Web from a document delivery system to an application platform. With the development of Ajax applications we see more of this as opposed to Java applets. These applications are easy and enjoyable to use. They promote the social networking and collaboration that is such a major part of the Web 2.0 experience. Best of all, they function just like a traditional application and the data is able to be used outside of the confines of the program and on a variety of devices.<sup>1, 11 & 18</sup>

Keeping these two themes in mind, let's make a comparison between how the Web was and how the Web is.

<b>Web 1.0</b>	<b>vs.</b>	<b>Web 2.0<sup>1</sup></b>
• AltaVista	vs.	Google
• Hotmail	vs.	Yahoo Mail
• Ofoto	vs.	Flickr
• Mp3.com	vs.	iTunes
• Geocities	vs.	Blogger
• MapQuest	vs.	Google Maps
• Encarta	vs.	Wikipedia
• Netscape	vs.	Firefox

When you look at how different the pairs of items on the list are, and realize they are dealing with the same content, you are able to identify the development of the themes discussed above, and how much more exciting they are to use than their Web 1.0 counterparts that thrilled us when they were first released.

Take some time and explore to see what is available out there. To help you, here are a couple of sites that bring together the variety of Web 2.0 applications that I have been exploring. The first one, [Go2Web20.net](http://Go2Web20.net), has well over 1200 applications listed. You can search and sort them by tags and keywords. It is a bit daunting, but the site says it covers everything that is Web 2.0. The second site, [Web 2.0 Awards](http://Web2.0Awards.com), you may find a bit more manageable as there are not as many, and they have rated and chosen these as the best of the best.

Although the day described at the beginning of this article is fictional, the usage of the tools mentioned is not. The web is no longer a display of information for people to peruse and look at. It is evolving into an interactive resource that teachers are able use to enhance collaborative activities as they enrich the learning experiences of their students. Teachers need to embrace the use of these tools because the children we are teaching in our classes are already actively participating in them. If we expect to educate our children in their proper use, the best way is to integrate them into our teaching repertoire, rather than burying our head in the sand and pretending they don't exist, or wishing that they didn't.

For us it could be a learning curve that we may not wish to embark on. We are the "digital immigrants", as you will be told when you attend technology seminars. When we were growing up, the technology the children of today take for granted did not exist. The students we are teaching now do not know that before there were wireless remotes for TVs there were remotes with cords. They did not grow up in a world where personal

music devices rarely fit in your pocket. They cannot fathom that producing a professional looking document had to be done by specialists. It is these things that make the children of today the “digital natives”. They have grown up with the technology at their fingertips, and to them, it has always existed. So, with this advantage, they take to technology like a fish to water, never looking back.

Although we are dealing many times with the same content, just like the steam engine, just like the World Wide Web, we need to be innovative as educators, and try new things.

Welcome to Web 2.0!

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