

Running head: Web 2.0

Web 2.0

Monica L. Daniels

Chestnut Hill College

As technology becomes more prevalent in today's world, more and more advances are being made to create an increasingly interactive world. The creation of Web 2.0 tools has made networking with friends, colleagues, and others very easy. The term Web 2.0 was coined in 2004 and includes all of the new and alluring Web-based tools (Solomon & Schrum, 2007, p. 13). These tools are similar to applications that are used on desktop computers; the difference is that these new tools are available to the user from any computer connected to the Internet at any time (Solomon & Schrum, 2007, p. 13). In order to do this, the websites are using open source. This means that the code is available for others to use and change freely (Solomon & Schrum, 2007, p. 46). "It enables the Web to shift from being a medium in which information is transmitted and consumed into being a platform in which content is created, shared, remixed, repurposed, and passed along" (Solomon & Schrum, 2007, p. 46).

As these tools continue to become more prevalent, there may be less of a need for purchased software licenses and updated software. All of the tools will be available on the Internet for the user to customize and use how they need (Solomon & Schrum, 2007, p. 49). The user will be able to interact with the information to create, fix, and use what they need to.

Some of the most commonly used Web 2.0 tools are blogs, wikis, podcasts, social networking, and online document management (Google applications). There is an excessive amount of websites that currently offer these tools so the user can search for the one that will best fit their needs. Each tool has a unique purpose that may or may not benefit the user. Certain websites are created for educators to use in their classroom, while others are meant as communication system between the user and the outside world.

Depending on the user and the person administrating the use, each tool has its benefits and downfalls.

One example that comes to mind is the use of wikis. “A wiki is a Web page that is accessible to anyone with a Web browser and an Internet connection (Solomon & Schrum, 2007, p. 57).” Wiki users are able to read and edit the webpage with the click of a button. This allows multiple people to come together and collaborate on one Web page without being in the same room or even the same country. The most popular wiki is Wikipedia, in using this site for reference, the user must keep in mind that the accuracy of the site, and any other wiki, is not always reliable.

Wikis can also be used in a business or educational environment to collaborate with employees and students. Wikis do have options for security. The administrator can set who is and who is not allowed to see the wiki, edit the wiki, or even leave comments on the wiki. Along with these added features, some wiki sites do charge the user a small fee. An example of a wiki site would be [www.pbwiki.com](http://www.pbwiki.com), this site allows its users to decide if they would like their wiki to be public or private and the administrator can define who the users are by adding e-mail addresses. This specific site also allows the administrator to create user names and passwords for those that may not have an e-mail address. With some wiki sites, in order to edit or even view it, the user must log in. Therefore all of their activity is tracked through pb wiki. This could be a great tool for both businesses and educators. The ease of use and interactive environment make wikis a desirable addition to the Internet and Web 2.0.

A blog is a set of personal thoughts that the author writes regarding something that is important to him or her. Outside users are not able to edit or change the writers' initial thoughts, but they are able to comment. This leads to conversations to share knowledge and reflect on the topic presented (Solomon & Schrum, 2007, p. 55). Blogs can be used in a variety of situations. Personally, people can use a blog to write about their everyday thoughts, ideas, and beliefs. Strangers and friends can then join in on the conversation to give input. They can also be used educationally as a way for students and teacher to discuss topics from the classroom. Some blog sites such as [www.edublogs.org](http://www.edublogs.org) are made specifically for educators while others such as [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com) are for anyone who desire to blog.

Google provides its users with a plethora of Web 2.0 tools. Included in this are the beneficial Google docs and the interactive homepage, iGoogle. Google docs allow the user to create documents, presentations, and spreadsheets to share on the Internet. No longer do users have to print or save their documents for distribution, now they are able to simply insert an e-mail address and they can share any documents for editing or reading. iGoogle allows the user to customize a homepage for when they are logged into Google. Personal calendars can be displayed; RSS feeds will be available, among many other options for the page.

These are just some of the most popular Web 2.0 tools and their uses that have evolved in the business and educational worlds. There is a certain apprehensiveness that coincides with using these tools, as with any new technology or innovation. Who should be allowed to use the tools, when should they be used, and in what capacity should they be used? All of these questions need to be answered before any implementation can

occur. “The Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), limits the ability of Web sites to offer services to children under the age of 12 without explicit parental consent (Solomon & Schrum, 2007, p. 138).” There is currently a law under consideration in Congress that would require public schools to block student access to social networking sites in school to avoid sexual predators (Solomon & Schrum, 2007, p. 139). Ethically, whoever is using the Web 2.0 tools needs to be aware of the dangers that can result from use. There are many reasons that would promote the use of web 2.0 tools in multiple environments, but there are also many reasons that would discourage their use. The administrator of any situation must weigh these pros and cons to make the decision to use the tools or to block their use. In the book “web 2.0 new tools, new schools” Solomon and Schrum give multiple situations and solutions to this problem of ethics. One solution given would be to host the tools on the Intranet of a business or school in order to keep it safer and less open to the public (p. 156). There is no right or wrong answer with regards to the use of Web 2.0. The tools are here and ready to use, users must decide how and why they will be using them. It is my opinion that the benefits of Web 2.0 outweigh the costs. Web 2.0 is not going away and will only continue to grow. Learning to use the tools and do so ethically is the next challenge that faces the world.

## **Web 2.0--Pros or Cons**

With the use of Web 2.0 tools, there comes the challenge of using them effectively and properly while dissipating the threats that go along with their use. There are many advantages to using the tools inside schools and corporations however, there are also threats to the networks that cannot be ignored. As with any web-based tool, there are security risks involved with usage. Not only are there threats to the network, but there are also risks to the user. In today's society, administrators must take precautions to protect the network and the user.

Inside classrooms and corporations Web 2.0 tools have some unique advantages that have never been present before. These tools allow users to “create strong communities of practice, essential aids to good teaching and learning (Groff & Haas, 2008).” Students, teachers, and employees are able to experience real life applications to learn and connect to the world. Students are learning in ways that will help them to develop as positive contributors to society. The technology is engaging students that may have otherwise disassociated themselves with schoolwork.

Technology is what students know; it is how they grow up, how they live their lives. Students explore social networks at home, they play video games, and they are generally more familiar with the Internet than their teachers and parents. One thing that students do not always recognize is the risk that goes along with using these tools. According to a survey done in 2006, principals and administrators said that their greatest concerns for students online were pornography, adult predators, and useless or irrelevant results when using search engines. Seventy-six percent of those surveyed had concerns

over unauthorized redirection to commercial or pay sites when conducting research (Solomon & Schrum, 2007, p. 140).

Among these valid concerns, network administrators must also protect the integrity of the network. By allowing web 2.0 tools through the network, there becomes a vulnerability for misuse and hacking. According to Anthony Plewes, “most security threats that affect web 2.0 are not new. They stem from issues with browser design and web architecture that did not anticipate how the web would be used in the future (Plewes, 2007).” Hackers are finding more and more ways to get into networks, infect them, and ultimately bring them down. Different websites pose different threats for networks. It is the job of the network administrator to prevent these threats from getting through and to keep the information on the network safe and secure.

To prevent the risks from getting through a network, filters are often put into place. Despite these filters, there are still some problems with sites getting through or results from searches being inappropriate. In addition to filters, districts and corporations have implemented acceptable use policies (AUP). In the past, these policies have outlined the guidelines, procedures, and responsibilities for using technology. As these new technologies emerge, districts and corporations must revisit their acceptable use policies to include the new online tools. The policy needs to be clear for students and staff to know what is permitted and what is not (Solomon & Schrum, 2007, p. 144).

In order to use the technology effectively, the teacher and employer must first be able to use it properly. By offering professional development and proper training, staff can become proficient in the tools and then can distribute that knowledge to others. The acceptable use policy protects the district or corporation against the misuse of

technology. If this misuse does occur, the organization has a means to deal with the problem legally. Even with the use of AUPs, there are still threats and the network administrator must decide which sites and tools are worth the risk and how to prevent the threats.

There are so many different aspects of web 2.0 that need to be considered when determining what is and what is not appropriate for different settings. There are some people who believe social networks such as My Space and Facebook have a place in schools and businesses. It is my opinion that these specific social networks are not appropriate for the environments in question and should therefore be blocked for the network. It is up to the network administrator to pick and choose what is able to get through. These administrators should start with applications and tools that staff are knowledgeable about and that can be monitored within the network. If a staff member has a valid reason and justification of use, it would be beneficial to have them “pilot” it’s use. After this, any other staff members who would like to use it would be required to undergo training to assure proper use of the tool. As the years progress, the hope would be to become advanced users of certain tools and continue to introduce other tools for use.

In any setting it would be important to research the security of sites and how their networks will interact with the school’s or corporation’s networks. The use of web 2.0 tools is still new to the world and the first thought would be to not allow them. Doing this, in my opinion, would be a disservice to those the network administrator serves. These tools are the future of the Internet and will not lesson in their importance to advancement.



Web 2.0 tools in general can provide students and employees an opportunity to experiment with things in the “real world” that would otherwise be out of their reach. Depending on what skills you are trying to impart or learn, the Internet offers a multitude of applications and tools that will enhance the learning environment. One example of this is Ayiti, a digital game that gives the user authority over a family to help them make decisions about their work, education, community building, personal purchases, and health care in order to improve their lives. Students are expected to evaluate situations and make the decisions based on what would be best for the character. There are also many other games that help students simulate situations where they could have just read a textbook before (Groff & Haas, 2008).

Educators should be taking advantage of the tools that have been created for specific use in schools. Some examples of education related tools include [www.pbwiki.com](http://www.pbwiki.com), [www.edublogs.org](http://www.edublogs.org), and [www.classblogmeister.com](http://www.classblogmeister.com). These sites all allow for administrative security and provide an environment for students to create their own learning space and connect to others. The main focus of web 2.0 tools in classrooms should be to form learning communities, not social ones. In using these, students are also learning proper behaviors and how to keep themselves safe when on the Internet (Solomon & Schrum, 2007, p. 156). The aforementioned websites provide a collaborative environment where the person named as administrator on an account can control what is posted and what goes on. These are just three of many sites that can be used to enhance learning.

Many districts and corporations setup a firewall to protect their network. This firewall filters what information comes into the network and can block out potential

information that could be harmful to the network. This is put into play to prevent hacking, viruses, spam, and other dangers. This filtering system can catch beneficial information and prevent it from entering the network; this is one of the many problems that administrators face. Technology planning committees are working on this among many challenges to keep the network and its users safe (Solomon & Schrum, 2007, p. 152).

Another solution to the threats of web 2.0 tools is to place the tools directly on the intranet, behind the firewalls of the district. This solution does limit the collaboration that can occur within the classroom, but it still allows the students and staff to collaborate with each other and across classrooms (Solomon & Schrum, 2007, p. 156). Keeping the threat contained in a manageable environment gives the user the opportunity to utilize the technology to impart learning.

As the network administrator, I would need to keep the network safe, but I must also consider what the tools will be used for. There will always be people who are more capable of using the technology and there will always be people who will test the limits of use. The AUP, if written well, will be the guiding point to fall back on to protect the integrity of the network. Those who sign the AUP know the expectations of use and should understand the consequences if they choose to violate it.

In the end, every district or corporation must make a decision as to what is useful and what is not. The skills used may or may not be more relevant than the threat posed to the network. Each site should be evaluated individually and a conclusion should be made based on the results. An overall ban on all web 2.0 sites does not seem to be the logical answer. Rather, allow those sites that will benefit the organization while proving to be as

small of a threat as possible. In most situations, I think that students and employees will find more relevance in their work this way.

## References:

Solomon, G., & Schrum, L. (2007). *Web 2.0 new tools, new schools*. Washington DC:

International Society for Technology in Education.

Plewes, A (2007, November 26). Web 2.0 threat looms- Research-Breaking

Business and Technology News at silicon.com. Retrieved November 22,

2008, from www.silicon.com Web site:

<http://www.silicon.com/research/specialreports/digitaldefences/0,3800014341,39169267,00.htm?r=6>

Groff, J, & Haas, J (2008, September/October). Web 2.0 Today's Technologies,

Tomorrow's Learning. *Learning & Leading*, 36, 12-15.