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Embracing Technology:

The Deschutes Public Library's Learning 2.0 Program

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At the Central Oregon Regional Library Conference in October of 2006, keynote speaker Michele Jeske of the Denver Public Library briefly mentioned this great self-paced technology training program at the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County (PLCMC) called Learning 2.0. Intrigued, Human Resources Manager Marian Thomas investigated the possibility of doing something similar at the Deschutes Public Library. Our own Learning 2.0 project was born—Embracing Technology.

When taking on any new training program, one should ask “why?” We targeted two very important goals: giving staff the opportunity to explore new online technologies for possible library application; and further developing a district-wide learning culture. Our introductory outline states the following:

We need to be lifelong learners because our communities change so rapidly and we need to not only be knowledgeable, but also we need to be proactive in educating, inspiring, and encouraging lifelong learning in others. E.T.—Embracing Technology—is one of the key ways we can be connected, be a catalyst for learning, and provide links to the wide world of possibilities.

The goal is to excite staff about the possibilities of new and emerging technologies and to encourage on-going exploration into the ever-changing world of new communication tools.

Marian Thomas quickly formed a team to plan and execute the program. In addition to Marian, team members include Teen Services Librarian April Witteveen, eServices Manager Wylie Ackerman, and Adult Services Librarian Liisa Sjoblom. We thoroughly reviewed PLCMC's Learning 2.0 site (<http://plcmclearning.blogspot.com>) and planned for a pilot project with the Redmond Library. This mid-sized

branch offered a mix of management, librarians, and library assistants who are motivated to experiment with new library programs. We contacted PLCMC for permission to use their program and linked heavily to their site via our intranet.

The nine-week pilot began in January 2007 with a target completion date of March 12. One of the main challenges was to get staff excited about the project. We felt that it was important to get people on-board quickly and to complete all of the exercises. We created a 30-minute in-person kick-off session covering the history of Web 2.0, some key terms, and information about support. At the end of the presentation we distributed a bookmark with key terms and a time line for completion, plus a short, fun quiz (Figure 1) pitting E.T., the movie against E.T.—Embracing Technology—the learning experience.

Figure 1
Embracing Technology quiz

E.T., the Movie

1. What was E.T.?
2. What was the name of E.T.'s friend?
3. What materials did E.T. use to make his phone?
4. What was E.T.'s favorite candy?
5. Who was E.T.'s face modeled after?
6. E.T.'s voice was performed by what movie star?

E.T. at DPLS

1. What is a blog?
2. What is a podcast?
3. What does an alert do and how do you create one?
4. How do you access your library account thru the OPAC?
5. How do you find out about current public programs?
6. Where do you go to download an audiobook?



Everyone received a paper copy of the quiz wrapped in a tube around a pen—their very own “youtube.” Completed quizzes were sent to Marian who issued the first incentive, a treat bag of chocolate, small alien toys, and a poem by Carl Sandburg (for those who do not know, E.T.’s face was partially modeled after Carl Sandburg). The responses to the quiz gave us an idea about who would be participating. The other key tools used to monitor progress were the personal blogs that staff created using Blogger (<http://www.blogger.com>). Weekly reminders were sent to staff to keep them on track and encourage continued participation. Throughout their exploration staff commented on their progress and experiences, both good and bad. The last blog message provided a chance to comment on the experience and provided an indication that they were finished. The final incentive of a \$10 movie gift card was sent to participants who completed all exercises.

At the end of the pilot six of 19 Redmond staff completed the program and provided feedback through a short survey. Results of that survey are listed in Figure 2.

Figure 2
Pilot survey questions with responses.

1. What was the most valuable part of the learning experience?
 - Trying out something new – 2
 - Getting up to speed on new technology – 5
 - Sharing your thoughts on a blog – 0
 - Being creative – 1
 - Other – 0
2. What were the barriers for you in completing the program?
 - Time – 7
 - Lack of interest – 0
 - Objectives were not clear – 0
 - Too much to wade through – 1
 - Not enough computers – 0
 - Other – 0
3. What did you think of the kick-off in the beginning?
 - Not needed – 0
 - Didn’t need the E.T. exercise – 0
 - Informative and fun; keep as is – 8
 - Keep informative part only – 0
 - Other – 0
4. What is helpful to have weekly reminders?
 - Yes – 7
 - No – 1
5. What do you recommend be modified before it is rolled out to other staff?
 - Shorter narrative to read – 2
 - Provide fewer options – 2
 - Provide estimated length of time for each segment – 3
 - Have options for learning, including read only for knowledge and practice exercises for those who want/need a deeper experience and more enhanced knowledge – 3
 - Other – 0
6. General comments – a chance to provide some open feedback.
 - Numerous comments provided.



Everyone found value in the introductory kick-off and they all liked trying out the new technology. The major drawback was time. Twenty-two activities, one less than PLCMC, were still too many. Before rolling it out to the rest of the staff the team needed to shorten the lesson plans and really make the learning experience relevant to the Deschutes Public Library.

The team reviewed the 22 exercises and managed to pare it down to a lean 14

exercises over nine weeks. We also took each of the exercises and wrote them for our own Web site. We were concerned that PLCMC would take down or alter their site as they updated their program. At this time none of our exercises link directly to the PLCMC site. We also moved the sequence of exercises around to logically fit what we wanted to emphasize. Figure 3 lists the current topics covered by Embracing Technology.

Figure 3
Embracing Technology – 14 Items

Week 1	Item 1: Learning 2.0/Library 2.0—What’s This All About? Item 2: Lifelong Learners—Are You One?
Week 2	Item 3: Create a Blog and Record Your Thoughts Item 4: Online Social Networking
Week 3	Item 5: Exploring the DPL Intranet
Week 4	Item 6: Make Life “Really Simple” with RSS and a Newsreader
Week 5	Item 7: Explore New Reads with NoveList Item 8: DPL Audiobooks – Expand Your Options! Item 9: The DPL Catalog – Your Friend and Ally
Week 6	Item 10: Learn About Tagging and Discover Del.icio.us
Week 7	Item 11: What are Wikis? And Why Are They Important to Libraries?
Week 8	Item 12: Photosharing with Flickr
Week 9	Item 13: Audio/Visual 2.0—Podcasts at DPL Item 14: Audio/Visual 2.0—YouTube Video Hosting



We also realized early on that we needed to create a shorter version for part-time staff, primarily working in Circulation. They do not have the same amount of time to devote to the exercises and also use shared computers, e-mail and related communication tasks. The short version, called Jump Start (Figure 4, right), runs for five weeks and involves eight different exercises. Instead of creating a blog where progress is monitored, they complete a short quiz at the end of the five weeks.

Everyone in the Deschutes Public Library system was invited to participate between June and September of 2007 with staggered completion by department or branch through November. The Learning 2.0 Team provided orientations and followed up with support and encouragement through the weekly reminders (Figure 5, right).

Blogs were monitored for progress and we often took time to comment on postings to encourage the social nature of the entire experience. As people finished, movie gift cards were sent to staff.

Results were and continue to be positive. Participation was voluntary for the initial run in 2007, but strongly encouraged, especially for staff providing reference service. Half of the staff participated to some extent and one third completed all of the exercises. Blog commentary showed some areas such as YouTube and flickr were more enjoyable than others. The RSS feeds exercise was the least-liked activity. Some blogs were quite creative and everyone indicated that they really liked the chance to explore. Many wished they had more time and those who did the short version wanted to do the longer version.

Figure 4
Jump Start – 8 Items

Week 1	Item 1: Learning 2.0/Library 2.0—What’s This All About? Item 2: Lifelong Learners—Are You One?
Week 2	Item 3: Online Social Networking
Week 3	Item 4: Exploring the DPL Intranet
Week 4	Item 5: The DPL Catalog—Your Friend and Ally Item 6: Explore New Reads with NoveList
Week 5	Item 7: Audio/Visual 2.0—Podcasts at DPL Item 8: Audio/Visual 2.0— YouTube Video Hosting:

Figure 5
Sample Weekly Reminder for Week 5

The Learning 2.0 Committee hopes that the past few weeks have been educational, fun, and maybe a bit challenging. Your blogs are looking great, and we encourage you to continue describing your experiences with this project (along with any other random musings you might like to share) through Blogger.

If you didn’t receive a Week 5 reminder (we’re still learning how to use some advanced features of Outlook!) and missed out on the exercises last week, please take a moment to go back to these easy lessons. Learn about some of the new (or new-ish) things that DPL has to offer our patrons. Have you tried out any of these services?

Week 6 brings us to the concept of tagging and the Web 2.0 tool known as De.licio.us. Perhaps you’ve noticed a “Tag this” button on your web browser tool bar, or have heard the word De.licio.us bantered around in a context other than describing treats available in the breakroom...this is it! I personally adore this tool because it allows me to save as many web pages as I want without the fear of cluttering my Bookmarks folder. Go forth and tag, and don’t forget your local support liaisons if you run across any snafus!



Embracing Technology has proved to be a worthwhile learning program for staff and it is now part of the general orientation for new staff. The initial E.T. quiz is no longer required, but it is shared during the kick-off sessions which are still given by team members. As staff finish, they also receive the movie gift card. Participation is generally initiated by the department manager. Current plans are to review the exercises each September and update as necessary.

We found this to be a very worthwhile endeavor and can recommend it to any library looking to get staff involved in their

own learning. Not only are staff learning about new and emerging technologies, the team learned much from the development process. From working with surveys, forms, and discussion forums on our intranet, to selecting Web links, to participating in the activities, we developed a model for future online training programs. We encourage others to embrace technology and develop similar programs in your library!

Documents for the Deschutes Public Library's Embracing Technology program are available online at <http://www.nwcentral.org> (search "embracing technology").

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