

Skilling staff for Library 2.0

Christine Mackenzie, CEO, Yarra Plenty Regional Library

Stephen Abram, SirsiDynix's Vice President of Innovation, and one of *Library Journal's* 'Movers & Shakers: top 50 people who are shaping the future of libraries and librarianship', launched the Yarra Plenty Regional Library (YPRL) Library 2.0 training program at Thomastown Library in outer Melbourne last October. The program is designed to make people feel comfortable and confident with the social networking tools that are becoming so popular and to encourage them to find ways of using them in the public library environment.

The Public Library of Charlotte Mecklenburg County (PLCMC) devised the learning program. It was a response to Michael Stephens, the librarians' blogger, and Stephen Abram, who respectively identified 43 and 23 things that librarians should know about new Web 2.0 technologies. The online learning program takes the student through a number of exercises including creating a blog, posting photographs to a website, tagging and podcasting. PLCMC have generously licensed their work under Creative Commons, which means that anyone can use it within boundaries. The staff at YPRL have three months to work their way through the exercises, and at the end of this period those who have successfully completed their tasks will be presented with a USB memory stick and a certificate, and go into the draw for a laptop computer.

Stephen spoke at the launch about the many ways libraries can use social networking tools to create online communities and to facilitate the creation of content in libraries. One example was a digital local history site created by a US library: teenagers took photos of local historical buildings, and seniors provided the narrative history.

He described the latest 'latest thing', Second Life, a 3-D virtual world entirely built and owned by its residents. Since opening to the public in 2003, Second Life has grown explosively and is inhabited today by over 900 000 people from around the globe. There are shopping malls, events, homes, lands of different types, and best of all, participants can contribute content, buildings, and other digital creations. And yes, they have not one but two libraries, which provide reference services and homework help. You can join their library and get access to online material.



Launching the program at Thomastown library

MySpace is host to a number of public libraries who use it to connect with their teenage users, and librarians are by far the most enthusiastic professional bloggers. Yarra Plenty Regional Library has two blogs, a general library one and another local history one, and are about to launch a wiki to encourage people to contribute to local history and local literature sites.

The staff at YPRL are enthusiastically taking up the challenge: we had only had the program for three days, there were already 43 staff enrolled and 10 blogs posted! And as of 14 November, there are 70 blogs registered (including three externals), with 87 staff and 7 externals enrolled. ✱

- **The PLCMC learning program is at** <http://plcmcl2-things.blogspot.com/>
- **Stephen's Lighthouse is at** <http://stephenslighthouse.sirsi.com/index.html>
- **Michael Stevens' weblog, 'tame the web: libraries and technology' is at** <http://www.tametheweb.com/>
- **Yarra Plenty's Online Learning blog is at** <http://yarraplentyonlinelearning.blogspot.com/>



Steven Abrams with Christine Mackenzie

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