

Rick's Place

Notes, Thoughts, and Random Musings on the Online Experience

by Rick Hein, AMIS web master

But the very success of YouTube strongly suggests that there won't be another YouTube, simply because one site downloading 58 percent of all Internet videos and that site, in turn, being acquired by the second-biggest video downloading site that also has more money than God, well the YouTube guys would have to commit mass suicide to blow their lead at this point and I don't see that.

Robert X. Cringely
Changing the Game
I Gringely

Welcome to the birthing pangs of Web 2.0.

Now everyone can be a publisher. Who needs broadcast media? Our recent International Honor Band and Choir Festival made AMIS history by being the first to have selections from the performance posted online. You can visit youtube.com and search, without the quotes, for "AMIS honour" and find eleven short videos of the concert. As I write, the finale has been watched 1,077 times. That's about twice as many people who saw it live on the night. Now I know you're going to say that it's about even, counting all the performers, but allow me to luxuriate in that number. Looking back in time, it was not long ago when we posted pictures of the 1999 Honor Jazz Band Concert on the budding Internet, (or Web 1.0 as it has now become), and it took five months to have 1,600 visitors. In four weeks we have had two thirds that number and they are watching video, not still pictures.

To quote Bob Dylan yet again, "The Times they are a-changin'." Your students are the ones who are tremendous multi-taskers. They listen to music, IM, blog, surf the web, work on their Facebook or Bebo sites, comment on others walls, read the comments on their walls and respond, then check the photos on Flickr or Photobucket and add a few tags then check out digg or slashdot or post a link to their del.icio.us page. Oh yes, occasionally homework rears its ugly head, but Google makes short work of research these days. Build a bibliography by cutting and pasting the URL, author and so forth into "Son of Citation Machine", paste the result into Word, autosort paragraphs alphabetically and Robert is your proverbial paternal or maternal sibling. If even that is too much work for you and your ethics run closer to the dark side, there are plenty of sites selling term papers and coursework.

It has been reported that over 75% of Internet connected homes in America now are on broadband. We are coming ever closer to the age of ubiquitous computing. Have a question? The answer is online and your computer is now always online. Our cellphones have more computing power than the original home computer, and possibly more power than the early mainframe computers. They are definitely more flexible. You can now take photos, play music, take videos, E-mail, write word processing and spreadsheet documents. What is more, you can take your instant creations and with one or two button presses post them from your phone to the Internet for the world to see. We are both consumer and publisher. Who needs an editor?

As mentioned last issue, at this point copyright begins to rear its ugly head. Many people post video captures of their favourite broadcast programs. People's right to privacy also begins to become an issue. Everyone is now a paparazzo and the picture of you doing that amusing dance with your eyelids peeled back and the twisted leer may not appear all that comical the next morning on a web site. Since everyone is their own publisher, how can you judge the expertise of the poster? Does an analysis posted by a twenty year old undergraduate history major carry the same weight as one published by a twenty-year veteran political analyst from a major broadcast syndicate? Who pays for these publications? Are there advertisers? Look again at your YouTube search page - you'll see at least two and probably two others.

The other element in Web 2.0 is the connections between events. I mentioned tags before, and they are the hot spots that link images to other images, other people and other sites. Images link to other images and there are new connections and a new social network is formed. Links are shared, connections made along the lines of the phenomenon "six degrees of separation". Tagging and mashups of data, maps and photos are a feature of Web 2.0. Anyone can tag a location on Google Earth and link to a picture they took of that location and have stored on the Internet. As an example, visit www.programmableweb.com and search for an audio visual "oral history" of Route 66.

Google is working at being the nexus of the links - the hub of all the connections. So is Yahoo. Notice two names missing from this article so far? I'll bet you did. The desktop is irrelevant to Web 2.0. Apple, Microsoft, Linux, or even something yet to come - the network is the computer. You can now, through a variety of providers, have a suite of programs that is 100% Microsoft Office compatible without using a program written by Microsoft or paying a penny to purchase them. What's more is that you can also create, share and publish these documents without ever saving them to any local computer hard drive.

Where has Apple been? Pioneering a legal way to sell music without physically producing cds or tapes or lps.

Following the message of John Negroponte in *Being Digital* Apple have found a way to sell bits, not atoms. They have sold a few atoms as well. In the five years since its introduction, Apple has sold its 100 millionth iPod (atoms). And to make it even dearer to the hearts of the business world, its companion the iTunes Store (bits) has sold over 2.5 billion songs, 50 million TV shows and over 1.3 million movies, making it the world's most popular online music, TV and movie store. Remember, Apple gives away iTunes.

Everyone wants a piece of Web 2.0 - even at a one or two percent pay rate the numbers generated by the new social web are truly mind boggling.

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