

How to use Web 2.0 technologies in your library instructions

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Introduction

Web 2.0 technologies have almost unlimited possibilities. But how can you use these in library instruction? Netvibes is one of the Web 2.0 technologies with many possibilities. With its help you can create your own personal start page. You can also share the content of a Netvibes-page with others. That makes it possible to develop pages for specific departments of your institution but also to use it in your instructions. This paper will briefly present Start Pages in general, as well as their possibilities and different providers. The main emphasis will be on how to use Netvibes in a library and library instructions. Furthermore an example of a start page for (trainee) Nurses will be presented.

Personal Start Pages [1-2]

Personalised Start Pages, also known as Web desktops, Ajax desktops, customisable portals and Web-based start pages are resources available on the internet. [3] They are provided by third parties and allow the users to create their own home pages, with the content they choose and the look they want.

With this tool you can make your own free personal start page. It allows you to put all your web resources onto one page, including blogs, news, email, pod casts, pictures, video casts, RSS-feeds, search-engines. In stead of opening all those kind of internet pages or tools one by one, you only open one page and you only have to log in once.

You can also share the content of a Netvibes-page with others. This makes it possible to develop pages for specific departments but also to use it in instructions. I will come back to this later.

Advantages

- The resources are web based: there is no software to download.
- Users have access to their start page from any computer connected to the Internet.
- Users can add links to pages they visit on a regular basis.
- Users can check their email on a regular basis and have displayed the titles of unread messages, depending on the e-mail package they are using.
- Most start page resources provide a whole host of other modules that can be dragged and dropped onto the page as wanted. Examples are links to Flickr accounts or groups, weather reports, small games, clocks, to-do lists, television schedules, chat options and so on.
- Modules exist which allow a small search box to be located on a start page, allowing users to run searches directly, instead of having to visit the search engine first.
- There are modules for various different search engines (their number is still increasing) and users can display them all on the same page.
- Anything that has an RSS-feed can be included.
- Users can share their content with others. (Not all start page resources offer this ability.)

- Personal pages can be made into public pages. (Not all start page resources offer this ability).
- Users can create their page according to their wishes, for instance the amount of columns, the colours, and background, among others. They can place the modules where they like.
- Users can add as many tabs as they like. They don't have to put all the content they want in to one page. They can divide their contents in different tabs.
- Users don't need detailed technical knowledge.
- ...

Disadvantages

- The company which developed the website may go bankrupt; decide not to develop the system or to close down the resource.

Warnings

- Keep copies of what you have created with a separate list of all the links you have created, just in case that the resource goes down.
- Don't add just anything to your page. Be critical. Otherwise you or your users will get lost in your page.

Providers

Some providers offering this kind of service:

- Netvibes (www.netvibes.com)
- Pageflakes (www.pageflakes.com)
- Live.com (<http://my.live.com>)
- iGoogle (www.google.com)
- Symbaloo (www.symbaloo.com)
- My Yahoo (www.myyahoo.com)
- ...

Netvibes, Pageflakes, iGoogle, Live.com and My Yahoo share the same basic layout: a page full of drag-and-droppable boxes that can be organised into tabs. All five sites allow their users to change the appearance of their desktop to some degree. Live.com is the most limited in this aspect.

Symbaloo (a Dutch project), relatively new, has an iPhone-like interface. The main difference with the other site is that instead of columns it works with a middle box.

All sites except iGoogle offer the ability to share pages with others. Netvibes offers their users the ability to create a separate public page known as a Universe.

Netvibes and Pageflakes are the start pages with the most flexibility. They have huge libraries of widgets that can easily be added. Their community aspect allows sharing at a variety of levels. [4] Netvibes has the advantage of easily creating a separate public page. But the choice between these two depends mainly on personal preferences. The Central Medical Library has made a choice for Netvibes. Main reason was the possibility of creating our own widgets and the possibility and the ease of making a Universe.

Start pages and libraries

The first step is to decide which one you are going to use. Look at the different sites and try out their possibilities your goals in mind. Decide what is going to work best for you, your library and your users.

As stated above, the Central Medical Library of the University Medical Center of Groningen has made a choice for Netvibes. Therefore the following part of this paper will be about Netvibes. However, most of it is also possible with, for example, Pageflakes.

Personal Start Pages

A Personal Start Page can be arranged according to your own wishes. You can use it to keep up with your profession, your interests, and your hobbies by adding feeds and links on your own start page. You can add You Tube, Flickr, Slideshare, and any other widgets you like (see www.netvibes.com). You can check your email; create a to-do-list, add search boxes, and so on. The list of possibilities is almost unlimited. I use my personal start pages mainly for feeds on blogs and news sites in my profession. Also I check my email on my start page. I know that for my own use I'm not using it as extensively as I could

A Personal Start Page can also be made for a patron individually, or for a department. The CMB has created a Start Page for a Doctor in Obstetrics and Gynaecology. In an interview, the doctor asked for a way of keeping up with the literature in her specialism. She was also interested in some quick-links to databases. She gave us a list of the journals she needs to check and named the databases she uses on a regular base. With that information the library created a start page for her. In the first tab the RSS-feeds were placed to the journals she named. The second tab consisted of search-engines modules (for PubMed, UpToDate, Livetrix (a meta search-engine), QuickSearch CMB and the Catalogue of the University of Groningen). A tab in her page with "possibilities", tools and/or databases she might find useful was also made. In a second interview an explanation was given about how the page works and she could ask questions. The library agreed to keep her page up-to-date for her. If she wants anything added or deleted we do it. It is not possible for us to have too many patrons ask us to keep their pages up-to-date. But in the meantime we are able to offer this service. After some practice it won't cost much time to either set up a personal start page or to maintain it.

Since the personal start page for this doctor was made, several of her colleagues are now interested in the services the CMB offers her patrons. The library is going to give a demonstration to the department and show the possibilities. If the colleagues of this doctor are interested in (almost) the same services, we will take a look at the possibility of making the doctors personal start page a group page.

Universes

There are various ways to use a start page for a group of people. The first way, which is not very efficient, is that each of them creates the same page. A second, and more efficient, possibility is that tabs of a personal start page are shared with the others. The third and most efficient way is to create a Universe. For creating a Universe you need a personal account, though your personal page may have a different content or none at all. The Universe is open for anyone on the Internet to see, but to add, delete and / or change content is only possible for the one(s) who can log on.

A library can make a Universe for one department. She can also create a Universe where each interested department can have its own tab. For example, the Central Medical Library has made a tab for the department Dermatology in her Universe (www.netvibes.com/cmb). The department gave a top five list of journals. The tables of content of these journals via PubMed RSS were put on the page, as well as an overview of the library's collection of Dermatology and a search box.

Start Pages in Library Instructions

The CMB assumed that it should be possible and in fact handy to use a Netvibes Universe in library instructions; to put together in one page all the tools that the target group need. To avoid double work a message was sent to several discussion lists asking if there were any libraries that uses Netvibes in their library instructions. At first there were almost no reactions. Therefore a second message was sent, this time with a slightly broader question, namely if there were libraries that uses tools like Netvibes, Pageflakes, My Yahoo, etcetera in library instructions, education, demonstrations, and so on. The message was put on, among others, the following lists:

- Nedbib (Dutch discussion list for information specialists and libraries)
- Biomedbib (Dutch discussion list for information specialists in medical libraries)
- Web4
- Offcamp
- Lis-medical
- Learningtimes
- Bibliotheek 2.0 (Ning-network for workers in a library)

Now more reactions came in. However most of the reactions were that the respondent was interested in the results of the action. The reactions were:

- Curiosity for the results.
- “What exactly can you do with those tools?”
- “Is it possible to use it for...?”
- Own use of a personal start page, but not in groups.
- The question of how to use these tools in groups.
- Helping patrons with their personal start pages.
- Using it as a website of an institution (www.netvibes.com/ounl).
- Using it as a means of communication with students.

H. Songhai presented a video at the Educon 2.0 Conference at the Science Leadership Academy in Philadelphia, January 27, 2008. [5] It shows examples of the use of personal start pages in educational settings. Songhai calls personal start pages “Cathedrals of Learning”. He uses it also for communication with his students. A college in Tilburg, the Netherlands, uses Netvibes in a course in journalism. They created several tabs with regional news, Dutch news, and international news. The teachers were the editors of these tabs. The students were allowed to add content to one specific tab. The teachers checked these additions and decided where to put the useful ones.

Examples of Start Pages in Libraries

- Library of Zeeland, a province in the South-West of the Netherlands: www.netvibes.com/zbdigital. A Netvibes Universe of a Public Library, beautiful layout.
- The National Library for Health: www.library.nhs.uk. This is not a Netvibes Universe. But the My Library section for logged in users allows personalization

and librarians can also add local content, for example RSS feeds, OPAC and web page links. Many NHS librarians will be instructing their users on how to make the most of these features.

- University of Pennsylvania Library: https://medley.isc-seo.upenn.edu/penn_portal/portal.php/217. A large project of this library, also known maybe as “PennTags”. Users can customize their page as soon as they have logged in with similar possibilities as in Netvibes and Pageflakes. (See under Why Customize.)
- Libraries of the University of Groningen: www.netvibes.com/ruglibraries. A Netvibes Universe with library news, the catalogue of the University of Groningen, a search box for electronic journals, the catalogue of Picarta (catalogue of about four hundreds Dutch libraries) and a tab called “Playground”. Playground is a tab where there is space for the libraries to experiment with new tools on the internet: go there where your users go.
- The Central Medical Library: www.netvibes.com/cmb. A Netvibes Universe constructed like a Library Toolbox and developed for Medical staff and students of the University Medical Center Groningen. It also has resources and tools which are useful for fellow medical libraries. This Universe is an example of how users could arrange their tools and resources in one personal start page. As mentioned above, this Universe also includes a tab for the Dermatology department.
- The Central Medical Library: www.netvibes.com/EduCMB.

EduCMB

EduCMB, developed by the Central Medical Center, is a Netvibes Universe focusing on nurses (in education). Nurses are a special target group. As most medical databases are focused on medical information it is often hard for them to find the information they need. They are a relatively small part of our clientele and they often have difficulty finding their way to the library (figuratively). It is often also hard for them to find the sources of nursing information in or on the website of our library. Therefore the thought occurred to us to put all the information they could possibly need in one page.

The EduCMB universe consists of six tabs.

- The first tab “EduCMB” gives information about the Universe, it contains link widgets which link to the Website of the CMB, to the address and opening hours of the CMB, to the website of the University Medical Center Groningen (UMCG), to the website of the Wenckebach Institute (Institute for education for health workers, part of the UMCG) and there is a widget for youtube.
- The second tab “Databases Algemeen” (General Databases), contains several search boxes: for the catalogue of the University of Groningen (RUG), for the A-Z list electronic journals of the RUG, for Livetrix (meta-search engine), for Picarta (Catalogue of Dutch Libraries), for PubMed, for Medigo (a Dutch healthcare and medical info search engine) and for searching on the internet (Google, Yahoo, Ask, Snap).
- The third tab “Databases Verpleegkunde” (Nursing Databases) contains five link widgets. One links directly to the Nursing Collection on our website, one to Invert (a Belgian database for nursing), one to a list of nursing websites, one to Cinahl and one to the electronic journals on the field of nursing in the RUG. There are also three feeds widgets in this tab. One to Nursing news in MedWorm, one to new titles in Picarta in the field of Nursing and one to Critical Care (a Dutch online nursing journal).

- The fourth tab “Tips” contains several link widgets. One to “Gaming in de zorg” (Gaming in nursing) a game of the Educational Institute Wenckebach, one to “hboVoorsprong” (a digital source for nursing education), one to a Dutch article-databank for nursing, another one to medical electronic atlases, one to the nursing sector of a Dutch medical start page, another one to a site about ethical questions on nursing practice, again another one to the courses and workshops the CMB offers, and the last one to i-service of the library.
- The fifth tab “News” contains of a feed widget to “Polsslag” the magazine for employees of the UMCG and a feed widget to new publications of staff of the UMCG in PubMed.
- The sixth and last tab “English” contains information about the Universe in the English language and has link widgets that link to English parts of the websites of the CMB, the UMCG and the Wenckebach Institute, to the electronic medical atlases, to Cinahl and to the English version of the i-service of the library.

Until now the Universe has been used three times in instructions. The trainee nurses reacted enthusiastically. They find it very handy that everything has been put together. Now they can find the resources they need.

The EduCMB has only existed now for several months and is not yet complete. Although the first reactions of trainee nurses are very enthusiastic, we have to wait and see if they are really going to use this Universe. The CMB will have to attract the attention of the target group of EduCMB. The Universe still needs some additions. The idea is to go the Wenckebach Institute and demonstrate this Universe. An option is also to contact some nurse practitioners and ask for feedback. Of course we are going to use EduCMB in the coming instructions to (trainee) nurses. After some time we will need to evaluate EduCMB.

The Central Medical Library will look into the possibilities of developing this kind of pages for other groups of patrons. We are also thinking of setting up a course in Web 2.0 tools for our users.

Conclusions

Personal Start Pages, like Netvibes and Pageflakes, offer many opportunities for libraries. With their help librarians can easily keep up with their literacy. They can show their patrons what the possibilities are and help them creating their own page. Libraries can set up a page for a department. A Universe creates the possibility to put together the search boxes, feeds, links and other utilities, that are useful for a particular target group and which can also be used as a starting point for instructions. According to the first reactions it seems that this is a new and promising way of using start pages. However, more attention and evaluation in the future is necessary.

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