

Collaboration Matters: A Quarterly Column

Nicole C. Engard (nengard@gmail.com)
Open Source Evangelist, LibLime

Introducing this collaborative librarian

Four years ago I finished my first major project for a library, an intranet complete with the ability for the entire staff to edit pages, contribute content and collaborate together virtually. I was so excited about this development, that I not only encouraged the staff to use the intranet for every bit of their day-to-day work, but I also started finding other ways that librarians could collaborate together more efficiently using technology. For this reason, when the *Collaborative Librarianship* staff approached me with the offer of writing this column, I made the logical decision and started writing.

That intranet served as the starting line for my library career and for the passion that has gotten me to where I am today. I have dedicated my time to educating librarians about the values of collaboration using the web as an enabler, but it's important to remember that the web is just a tool. In my writing and speaking, I always remind librarians that our greatest assets are each other. We all have different areas of expertise; why not work together to use our time more efficiently?

Collaborative Learning

"If you have an apple and I have an apple and we exchange these apples then you and I will still each have one apple. But if you have an idea and I have an idea and we exchange these ideas, then each of us will have two ideas." -George Bernard Shaw

We, in libraries, are being bombarded daily with new terms and technologies: web 2.0, semantic web, cloud computing, RSS, blogs, wikis, content management systems, instant messaging, SMS, mobile web, etc. How are

we supposed to keep up? The answer is collaboration, collaboration using these tools and collaboration in learning about these tools!

I'm often asked how I keep up with all of the new technologies; the answer is I don't. It's not possible to keep up with every area of librarianship and still sleep; instead I use my friends and colleagues to help me stay current. The most important tool in my professional life is my RSS aggregator, Bloglines <https://beta.bloglines.com>. Why Bloglines? It's just personal preference and I recommend trying several of the free options available before making your choice.

Why an RSS aggregator? Simply because my own journey into collaborative learning started with an RSS aggregator. It has allowed me to bring the collective knowledge of my peers together into one place so that I can keep up with hundreds of librarians' shared learning. One of the commonalities that hold all librarians together is the desire to share information, and now that the web is full of tools that allow us to share our knowledge in a wider world, there's no stopping us!

While it is obvious that I have a passion for technology and its use in libraries, I have a stronger desire to get librarians to share their knowledge not just with their patrons but also with colleagues across the world. If we truly want to be collaborative librarians then we need to collaborate across walls, state lines, and oceans. This is where the technology comes in – it has removed boundaries that used to hold our knowledge into our single library buildings and allows us to learn and share together online.

On that note, I'm going to share all of the resources I subscribe to to keep up with li-

brary news and technologies. Skim through my list and find the topics of interest to you, <http://www.bloglines.com/public/talia679> then check with those blog authors to see who they're keeping up with. By the next issue of this journal you should have a tool-

box of at least 20 feeds to library related sites to help you learn from your colleagues.

In my next column, I will give you several tools you can use to share your knowledge with your colleagues both near and far. For now, keep learning until next time!