New services, new realities: the experience of the State Public Library of Huelva in the new digital world

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This forum is an invaluable chance to demonstrate the evolution followed by our library throughout the last six years, a development that shows perfectly many other similar experiences that different public libraries have been going through in our country.

In the following lines we will go over these matters:

- Our former successes and failures. We started from our previous experience and, although we have failed, we were one of the few State Public Libraries present on the Internet http://bphuelva.sistelnet.es.

- The experience work and the use of the application GSW (Website Generator) started by the Subdirectorate-General for Libraries Coordination of the Ministry of Culture http://www.bibliotecas-publicas.es/huelva/ and the good relation with the company and the professional team responsible for the development of the tool.

- The data migration to a new platform and to a new content manager within the net server we depend on: the internet portal of the Andalucía Public Libraries Network http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/cultura/bibliotecas/.

- Finally, we will analyse the open prospects of our future work (in our working environment) with the new realities brought by the web 2.0.[1]

Former experiences

Web page lodged in an external Internet service provider server (March 2001/ Summer 2004).

Our library appeared first on the Internet in March 2001, when it presented its first web page http://www.bphuelva.sistelnet.es[2], almost one month after the opening of the new building, after the total remodelling works of its former location made by the Ministry of Culture.

The library's management team took charge of drawing up the information that was displayed as a kind of still photo in that first website, lodged in a commercial Internet service provider: the web company hosting SISTELNET. Nonetheless, although this positive start, the provided service did not work properly because it was hugely difficult refreshing its content to keep the page updated. The company and the external server that lodged our page closed in the end and our page remained as a testimony or residue in one of the last nooks of the institutional website of the Andalucia Regional Cultural Ministry (Conserjería de Cultura de la Junta de Andalucía.)

This experience shows the initiatives, the lack of maintenance and the failure of many web projects in this first stage of the development. And among the reasons that explain these failures, we could mention the following:

- Lack of technical knowledge of HTML computer languages and web page design.

- The poor support of the computing unities of the various administrations apart from exceptions.

- The necessity of setting about a series of administrative tasks in the server lodging the web, and that, is out of our reach.

- The absence of a content manager that permit to manage the web information in a decentralized and allocated way, or to manage it autonomously by the library itself. In this horizont, we were dealing with web pages with static contents that needed an external maintenance, and to solve this problem, it was necessary to make dynamic web pages easy to update.

- The eagerness of the institution that controls the library to make uniform its corporate identity, reducing the possibilities of operating freely which are required for being on Internet.

Pilot phase of the Website Generator of the Ministry of Culture

The opportunity given by the SGCB to take part in the GSW project meant a very enriching experience for us. Specifically we had the chance to work together with the Vitoria, Guadalajara and Salamanca State Public Libraries as well as with the local library in Tortosa along 2003 when it started to work through its pilot phase, then we held a series of business meetings with the company responsible for the development of the contents manager application. On summer 2004, the first definitive web pages were displayed on Internet. We made the official or institutional presentation in the II Public Libraries National Conference that took place in Salamanca from the 17th to the 19th November 2004.

Our experience in the design and maintenance of the web page lodged in the domain www.bibliotecaspublicas.es

The philosophy of this project was based on the setting up of a work team within the library that made possible the beginning of the project and its continuity. The first approach made by this team raised some questions:

- What do we actually want to show of our library through that splendid soundbox that is Internet?

- What services do we want to offer?

- And above all, what digital and web contents did we want to display on our virtual office to offer added services, that is, to offer a more quality service to our users?

We learnt that the process of issuing a web page must be gradually increased, trying to feed little by little the structure of contents in order to reach the ideal model we want for our web page. In our case, we chose a maximum levels policy because we were looking forward to being again on Internet, offering

information about our library, showing the projects we were developing at that moment, and also offering our users the possibility of taking part in the process.

We did not want just to offer some static information, basic information of general nature: address, opening times, telephone number, email address, description of the sections and services we offered... This kind of web pages are like a static photo of the library, not really appealing although necessary and useful. We preferred a more dynamic and pro-active model, choosing the added value services. Our efforts were recognized and were used as an example to other libraries that had started the adventure of developing a web page helped by the Ministry.

Andalucía Public Libraries Network Portal http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/cultura/bibliotecas (March 2005)

Our previous productive experience were useful in great extent to lead the process that we entrusted by our own autonomous administration, when it was decided that the web pages belonging to the libraries run by Regional Cultural Ministry should be in the domain www.juntadeandalucia.es and with the same corporate identity. The new portal and our, so to speak, 3rd web page were officially presented in March 2005[3].

We have to mention that the Andalucía Public Libraries Network Portal has been set on a platform of free software, which is also being offered to all the local libraries in Andalucía with the aim of making them visible on Internet, and that allows the librarians to make and maintain their contents and pages on internet easily.

Relevant aspects of Huelva State Public Library Website to highlight (fortes and opportunities of our model of website) http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/cultura/bibliotecas/bphuelva

- Currently our website is conceptualized as a virtual branch that completes and strengthens the services offered to the visitors at the library building. We have aimed also to give it some appealing and useful contents that lure both users and non-users. Our website is riddled with those constant baits and lures that try to capture user's attention: we can see photos of children's visits, for instance, so that they can download them and show them to their envious friends that they are on Internet, photos of the winners of certain competitions that create a sound competitiveness among the participants of our contest "the best reader of the month"[4], the possibility of showing on internet the conclusions and impressions gathered by the members of our reading societies, news about the new events and activities organized. With this kind

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1 This term has been coined by Tim O'Reilly, who defines the concept in his article: "Qué es web 2.0. Patrones del diseño y modelos del negocio para la siguiente generación del software" an Spanish tranlation is available in: Boletín de la Sociedad de la Información (23-2-2006) http://sociedaddelainformacion.telefonica.es/documentos/articulos/TRIBUNA_web2.pdf

2 "Nueva Web de la Biblioteca Pública del Estado de Huelva", Educación y Biblioteca: revista mensual de documentación y recursos didácticos, may/june 2001, Year 13, Nº 123. p. 47-48

3 Gómez Gómez, Antonio Agustín: "Portal en Internet de la Red de Bibliotecas Públicas de Andalucía", Correo Bibliotecario : boletín informativo de la Subdirección General de Coordinación Bibliotecaria, nº 81, March 2005, p.5-6 http://www.bcl.jcyl.es/correo/pdf/correo81.pdf

4 As the Instrucción 2006/2 del Fiscal General del Estado, concerning the Ley de Protección Jurídica del Menor, January 1996, states, the spread of this kind of images is allowed if it does not imply negative connotations specifically regarding information related to children's world when it convey positive values.

of contents we try, in short, to gain our everyday users'loyalty and to turn them into web users too. Our library has a clear service vocation; not directed to have a national scope but to the users that already know us and visit us daily. That is why our website emphasizes the local topics and winks at our users-clients and their channels of participation.

- Huelva BPE-BP's website was conceived as a great tool of marketing and spread of the activities of the library. In this way, we make the distinction between two types of news in our portal:

  a) News Channel[5] that gathers general news about the library's dynamic, set about of new services, special opening hours, etc.; and at the same time it holds all the contents, prizes, competitions and library activities announced in the local scope. In this sense, it becomes an informative channel for the community, in which 53 inputs were displayed last year.

  b) Cultural Agenda[6], it consists on a monthly calendar chronologically arranged. All the news published here are related exclusively to specific events and activities that have taken place in the library facilities (courses, meetings and conferences in the assembly room, animation activities going on at the children and young adult department or exhibitions at the library vestibule).

- With the homepage, we want to highlight some specific sections of the contents map, or emphasize some of the activities that we aim to carry out. It is a section constantly updated.

- We also develop a very active policy as far as our presence on the media is concerned, with the goal of being more visible to public opinion and reinforcing our external image. In one of our sections, The Library on the press[7], we offer a selection of news published in the local media (press, radio and television) related to the library.

- Elaboration of press dossiers: as the above mentioned before or the one named local press database, specialized in relevant local monographic topics[8]. Following, in some ways, the model of the State Public Library of Tarragona, we have begun to compile a selective documentary database that contains references to news published on the press, and that are managed through the Integrated Library Package AbsysNet. Before the analytic cataloguing of the article, we digitized, as a pdf file, the page of the newspaper where the article has been published, we upload the folder to our sever and lastly, we link it through the field 856 of localization and electronic access of the bibliographic register.

- One of the more popular sections, regarding its numerous visits, is the Huelva library history[9], section in which we present a historic outline of our institution that has been in the service of Reading in Huelva for 150 years. This is illustrated by old photos and digitized press clippings from the newspaper Odiel in the 40s, 50s and 60s.

- It is important for us to spread our active presence in library cooperation projects[10], either on a local, national or international level (Ask a librarian, REBECA, GSW, PULMAN, CALIMERA) and that to a certain extent, have been excellent opportunities that have forced us into continuous and beneficial learning processes.

- Our eagerness for transparency in our aims and achievements is reflected in our annual report recollected in our library in numbers[11], where we offer a series of graphics with the statistic indicators that show the achievements an the evolution of our services.

- Another of the most visited services is our SDI service[12]. We display, almost monthly, a news bulletin delivered by email in enriched html format, in which we include news about the programmed activities and links to various sections of our website[13]. This message is delivered to almost 3.500 users with valid email address on the database of readers of our Integrated Library Package, and to do so, we use a platform of massive email delivery service, provided by the Andalucía Autonomic Government. In fact, we can observe that users visit our website mostly on the day of the deliver or the following days. This email gives the user the possibility of cancelling the service. And, at the same time, these informative bulletins that we send to the users by email, are displayed on the section services on line in our website[14].

- We have insisted on gather all the information of local interest (like an information resources directory on Internet about literature, leisure and culture, country holidays and cultural tourism…). And we have specially emphasized the role of the library as a go-between in the spread of the local literary panorama: literary Huelva and authors of Huelva online guide.

- New technologies provide a great potential for spreading of literary works and productions, and our libraries are cultural institutions closely related to the book and to the literary world, that should be strategically placed in that gap in the market, in the contested environment that is Internet. In this sense, we have created the two tools above mentioned as an excellent business opportunity to access to that flooded "Persian market" that is

Internet, overtaking other possible initiatives and taking a sector or market share to be considered as a reference site in which the user can consult all the informative resources related to the local literary scene. Literary Huelva section is arranged as a sort of resources agenda with detailed information about bookshops and libraries in Huelva and its region, chats, literary societies, contests literary prizes, etc...

We have always aimed to promote books and reading, as we consider that we have to preserve the raison d'être of the library, defined as the house of books and therefore, the house of the writers. That's why we have made a great effort to develop the called authors of Huelva online guide[15]. Furthermore, as a provincial library, we are in charge of the local bibliographic heritage from the Legal Deposit Department. This role is the explanation and basis of our commitment to divulge local writers through the presentation of specific informative contents in Internet[16].

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5 Current news can be consulted at:
   http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/cultura/bibliotecas/bphuelva/herra-mientas/noticias.html
   The historical archive of news from 2006 is collected in the section Sabías que ("Did you know that...") belonging to our digital magazine, annually published:
   http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/cultura/bibliotecas/bibhuelva/activbi-blio/revistaDigital01-07/sabiasQue.html
6 http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/cultura/bibliotecas/bibhuelva/activbi-blio/agendames.html
   It is important to point out that a total of 233 events were published in our Cultural Agenda during 2006, many more than those published during 2005, 137.
7 http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/cultura/bibliotecas/bibhuelva/infgene-ral/biblioprensa.html The local press published 202 news items related to the library. On the contrary, 47 news items were registered in 2005.
8 We have just made one of them so far and it dealt with the Trienio Zenobia- JuanRamón.
   http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/cultura/opencms/export/bibliotecas/bibhuelva/noticias/detalle_noticia_12663.html
9 http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/cultura/bibliotecas/bibhuelva/infgene-ral/histbiblio.html
10 http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/cultura/bibliotecas/bibhuelva/infgene-ral/proy.html
11 http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/cultura/bibliotecas/bibhuelva/infgene-ral/estadist.html
12 http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/cultura/bibliotecas/bibhuelva/servnli-nea/boletines.html
13 This is one of the most useful strategies to gain customers' loyalty as we seen in: Verónica M. "Técnicas para fidelizar visitas", in La Webera : una tortilla de consejos útiles para tu Web, http://www.lawebera.es/pro-mocionar/fidelizar_visitas2.php
14 http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/cultura/bibliotecas/bibhuelva/servnli-nea/bolinfor/bol_adu.html
15 http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/cultura/bibliotecas/bibhuelva/informlo-cal/guiacompletadeautores.html
16 In the local scope, we have to mention the service started by the Pacto Andaluz por el Libro, after the agreement signed by the Consejería de Cultura de la Junta de Andalucía with other administrations and organizations: Escritores en la Red, http://www.escritoresenlared.com/ , it is a database in which the authors are requested to generate the contents.
17 Margaix-Arnal, Dídac (2007)

This guide consists on a group of bio-bibliographic record cards that have a double aim, on the one hand they spread the work of these writers among the general public promoting them on Internet, which, at the same time, it is a strategic active asset for positioning and making visible our own library on Internet. At the moment there are 82 writers and their published works included in the website; most of them are very young and others are not so, but all of them show the active literary scene in the region of Huelva. Our sources of information have been the covers of their books, Internet -an indiscreet friend that reveals everything- and the writers themselves, very interested in this project and who have collaborated, some times to a large extent, to complete the information displayed about them, and that have created a growing virtual community of users of this service.

▪ The inner structure of these record cards has a second purpose specifically focussed on the literary critic and research, with emphasis on the exhaustive references to other websites related to the writers we are studying, and that can be found on Internet. The reduced scope of that group of writers allows us to carry out this kind of project. The final result in a kind of digital repository of certain information, which is very often, menaced by the volatility of the web pages and URL links that manage them. We think that this might be an example of good practise that could be followed by other libraries helping in this way, to develop informative contents of local interest, one of our basic roles.

▪ Our Digital Journal is designed as a kind of mouthpiece or library's way of expression and also as a space where the protagonists are our users. Furthermore, as it is released periodically, it is used as a reliable record of our activities.
Finally, the most valued product that our website can offer is the access to our Online Catalogue, which consists on a cooperative catalogue on Internet, and that gathers the stock of 574 libraries throughout Andalucía; it includes more than 1.000.000 titles and offers 4.500.000 copies to the 916.000 Andalusian users that have joined any of the libraries in this web. Our OpacWeb, in addition, includes all the functions of the latest in Integrated Library Package technology: booking management, purchasing suggestions, and booking renewals. Advanced services that allow us to interact with the users on Internet -without their presence in the Library- offering them personalized remote services. Although it is still very far from becoming that new model of social Opac that could be implemented in the Web 2.0.[17] field.

Disadvantages of the current model
(weaknesses and threats)

As far as the disadvantages are concerned, a library like ours, that follows the model of institutional web, has to face the following problems:

We have to be included in the website of the institution to which our library belongs (Council or Regional Ministry). These institutional websites present a structure highly administrative and with a clear hierarchy, in which the library is only displayed as one of the services and this reduces the visibility of the library as far as the form is concerned and, also the informative architecture, prevailing the corporate identity criteria of the higher institution.

In our case, our limitation can be seen in the domain itself because it labels and announces our Internet address: excessively long and not very friendly.

Impossibility if independent and quick action, as for instance, the limitations to introduce new services that are not available in the servers of the Regional Ministry, as the use of hosting or external web pages, that breaks with the philosophy of the management of our Regional Ministry. Thus, the new tools of the so called social software (blogs, content syndication, news adders, social tags) are not available in our model of portal; that's why we are still far from becoming that new library considered as another user of the web 2.0. And our real problem is the lack of support of the department responsible for the public web of our Regional Ministry to the necessities, we raised to improve our services.

Analysis of the audience and the niche market: who are the potential customers of our web and what interest them most?

We can not forget that we are dealing with an institutional web that offers a service with the aim of approaching the citizen. Thus, firstly, we owe ourselves to our visitors, and also to the so-called non-users of the library building, that is, potential users in the community scope where we work but who do not know, nor visit our building. Last but not the least, our contents may be very appealing to the external web users. These second users (net surfers) will hardly visit the library building but the information we display might be highly useful for them: information related to local issues specifically on the "Guía online de autores onubenses" ("Online Guide on Onubenses Authors") or the announcements of the literary contests in the local scope.

Furthermore, in order to gain our Web customers' loyalty, we have to offer them quality contents constantly updated, otherwise, the user who has already seen our information wont visit the page again.

We have also to make our novelties visible, to display them emphasized on the front page is a good strategy; in our website, users can access to all those novelties through the bulletin board placed in the home page. Another suitable device to gain user's loyalty is the news bulletin above mentioned, although currently it is much more useful that the user himself has the possibility of subscribing to one of the syndication sources, as they are reticent to sign in a news bulletin[18].

What is the result of all this effort?

It is of real importance to know which are the most visited pages, and, considering this, continue or not making new similar contents, which is the percentage of giving up on the front page (which shows if they find it interesting or not) the number of the pages most visited by user, the time they are usually connected to the web, etc...[19]

Our website has a prominent position regarding the rest of the Websites of our counterpart libraries in our community, and we have the highest number of visits.

Number of visits to the web:

Almería	15.475	Huelva	22.443
Cádiz	14.476	Jaén	10.303
Córdoba	11.620	Málaga	15.704
Granada	13.718	Sevilla	20.009

We have to point out that, the first semester of 2007 we have had almost the same number of visits to our website as during all 2006, when 22.443 visits[20] were registered. The number of our online users has been increasing significantly and it represents now the 10% of our visitors.

And now the web 2.0. What is the role that the called web 2.0 might play in the future of the services that our libraries can offer on the internet?

In this sense, our current model of library portal differs from the participative and creative 2.0., which is based on the idea of using the digital platform or web application so that it is the user who makes the contents in the end. I completely agree with my college Fernando Juárez Urquijo[21] when he says that the problem is that the professionals of the libraries do not know the new tools of social webs. Firstly we have to become users of these tools at home, play with them to be able to offer and use them at work. And, above all, I agree with him that many of our administrations, specially the biggest ones with a rigid structure, are more reticent or slow when they have to introduce the new web 2.0. technological environments, much more flexible than the previous ones.

We think that our internet office is an excessively institutionalised web that follows the pattern of the library portal of the called web 1.0., in which communication is almost exclusively unidirectional. At first sight, that is one of our weaknesses but it gives us at the same time a chance to future improvement. Thus, the web 2.0. allows us to offer a series of much more

interactive channels than the current model and one of the best examples of the new products of the web 2.0. that can be used in our professional field are the library blogs. Following this new tendency, our library has also taken its first steps[22]. In our case, baring in mind our imposed limitations and the lack of time to devote to this project, we think that the possible blog of a library like ours might have a double strategy:

a) We have to improve our visibility and position in the group of browsers (like Google), for this we will increase the number of links directed to our pages. Thus, we can do a simultaneous work and make of the blog a kind of mirror of the institutional web from where we extract the interesting informative news, and we copy them through this social and much more flexible channel; in short, a kind of nest of links that would increase the front page's rank in Google searching engine, while it is not a massive procedure that might bring us some kind of sanction from the browser.

b) We have to offer a channel technologically more suitable to encourage the participation of our micro-audiences. An example of this may be the posts on

books that are written at the reading clubs meetings, and the associated comments that can be uploaded by the members of those clubs, or the book recommendations made by the library through its news bulletin.

A great deal of blogs have come up recently in our field[23] and many of them have been created as a marketing and promotion tool of the services of the library or to encourage users to take part in the library. However, in many of these blogs that best exemplify the 2.0. library model, we observe, by now, a significant lack of comments by the community of users to whom they are addressed, which reduces all that effort to an exercise to the gallery.

In our case, other small attempts to approach that social web or web 2.0. would be, for instance, the introduction of an opinion poll questionnaire, that allows some kind of interaction with the user who visits us. It is another inducement through which we can ask his or her opinion on an specific service, or poll them about their preferences an hobbies. We are not talking about academic polls with a research aim, but about proposals oriented to encourage our user's participation and to reinforce their prominence. This is one of the fields in which we are working at the moment and therefore, it is now a future challenge.

Regarding the field of the social web, we could mention our effort to collaborate with Wikipedia to turn our library into a writer of this internet free encyclopaedia and to be at the same time one of its entries. We have published an article on our library because we think that it will help us to gain more visibility as a cultural centre and as a Website[24]. And we are also promoting our information of local interest like the "Guía online de autores onubenses" in that encyclopaedia[25].

Conclusions: What are our future prospects?

Public libraries need to be introduced in the already crowded market of web content generation. The key to success is to focus on our users and enable them to take part in the information displayed on our library website and make them feel the protagonists. Furthermore, the internet is a labyrinth full of dark rooms, locked places; useless web pages never visited. The web pages of many of our libraries, even if the librarians have devoted many hours to improve them, can become rooms whose doors will never be opened. Our challenge as librarians is to know how to give our website useful and appealing contents. Local contents, information relevant to our direct users and to the potential ones will be the key to success. The new technological environments of the web 2.0. have the advantage in this sense.

In spite of our productive trajectory we have still the feeling that, in some ways, we are late to technological advances. While we have just introduced our libraries' websites, internet users are much more ahead in that new reality called web 2.0.

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18 "Sindicación web". Available in: Wikipedia: la enciclopedia libre. [Search: 9th September 2007]. Available on: http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sindicación_web.

19 Verónica M. "Analiza tu audiencia. Clave de éxito en la Web", in La Webera : una tortilla de consejos útiles para tu Web, http://www.lawebera.es/de0/audiencia.php . However we find some surprises; for instance, one of the most visited sections is the one devoted to Flamenco, to which we have not paid special attention since it was made. This page has not been specially relevant regarding our interest because it was only a page of links to other websites. The generation of this kind of contents is not a priority for us as there are other pages devoted to this. We have follow a different strategy regarding our local writers.

20 "La web de Huelva, la más visitada de las bibliotecas de Andalucía", in Odiel Información, 17-07-2007 http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/cultura/opencms/export/download/bibhuelva/ODI20070717_0013.pdf.

21 Fernando Juárez Urquijo "Un problema de desconocimiento", in Jorge Serrano Cobos: Web 2.0 en las bibliotecas: el concepto Library 2.0, Thinkepi [http://www.thinkepi.net/repositorio/web-20-en-las-bibliotecas-el-concepto-library-20/].

22 The fashion of the blogs has also arrived to our library, although at the moment it is more an attempt than a reality: "La mar de libros : otro maldito blog sobre una biblioteca" Available on: http://valleriego.wordpress.com/ It is an experiment made at the course organized by the Asociación Andaluza de Documentalistas to which we had the opportunity to assist and that was given by Jorge Serrano Cobos, March 2007.

23 Librarianship and Documentation Blogs in Spain : http://sedicblog.wikispaces.com/blogsByd.

24 This is an inniciative proposed recently in one of the most active professional lists in our country, IWETEL http://listserv.rediris.es/cgi-bin/wa?A2=ind0708E&L=iwetel&P=R4463&D=1&I=-3 and that has been supported by our library with a great interest http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblioteca_Pública_del_Estado_-_Biblioteca_Provincial_de_Huelva.

25 Some instances of that wikification can be seen on: http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juan_Drago or http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manuel_Garrido_Palacios. As well as in other articles that show our local literary scene: http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asociación_Literaria_Huebra. In short, we also try to get a higher number of links leading to our official page and to generate traffic to our website with strategies of this kind.

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