

In Search of the Web 2.0: Part Two



WEB 2.0 GOES BEYOND the blogs, wikis and podcasts, described in an earlier article (*Internet Genealogy's* April/May 2007 issue), to make the web even more of a social medium. This is done with the aid of what can be broadly described as "social networking software", software designed to encourage collaboration and community. As with everything else new on the Internet, genealogists have very quickly made themselves at home using what are often seen as tools reserved for the young.

SOCIAL BOOKMARKING

Social bookmarking is a big part of networking online. Simply put, social bookmarking is the ability to save your own favorite web bookmarks to a public website, where they can be catalogued or "tagged" with your own choice of keywords. These bookmarks are shared with other visitors to the site, who can then add your bookmarks to their own personal collection. Why might you want to do this? It is another way of connecting and sharing with family historians who share your specific interests, this time based on their favorite websites and the words they choose to tag them. On a more prosaic level, it also allows you to access your favorite websites from anywhere.

The most well-known of the social bookmarking managers is

del.icio.us, <http://del.icio.us/>. Here, if you enter a phrase such as "genealogy Scotland", you will find hundreds of sites that have already been bookmarked and tagged with these words. In addition, you will find how many people have bookmarked each site. The notation showing this information is a hyperlink that leads to a page showing the tags that have been used by del.icio.us users to describe the site. This list of tags is known as a "tag cloud", where the more often a term has been used, the larger it appears on the page. The notes that site users have attached to the site also appear, as does the posting history of the site. Following the user name links contained in the posting history shows all the individual's del.icio.us bookmarks and gives you an idea if you have interests in common.

You can share your bookmarks with family and fellow researchers by giving them a link to your del.icio.us page, which will be <http://del.icio.us/youruser>

[name/](#). Or you can share only those bookmarks you have tagged with certain words, such as a surname, with others. You can also build a personal network of family members who are also del.icio.us users, so that everyone's bookmarks can be viewed together.

To make the best use of del.icio.us, you will need a free account and to download the buttons, or bookmarklets, that make it easy to move yourself and your bookmarks to the site.

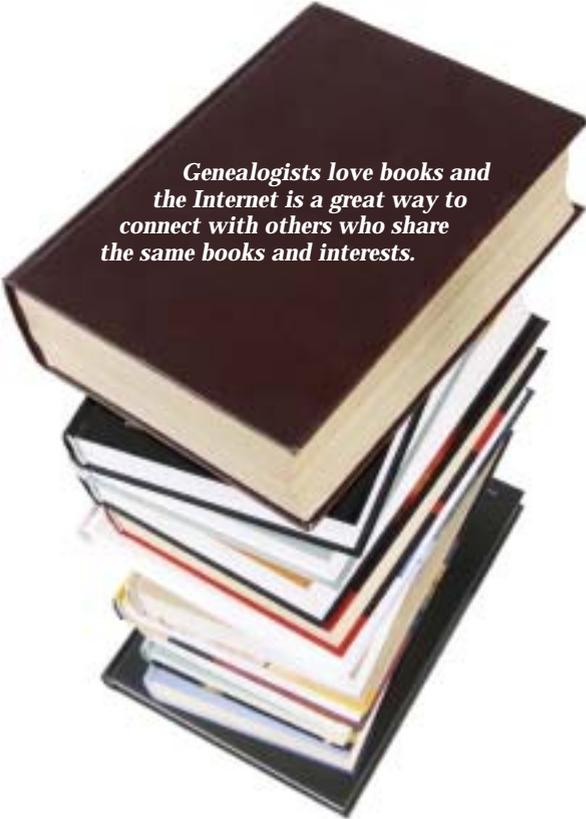
Another social bookmarking site you might want to investigate is Furl, www.furl.net, which saves not just a bookmark, but a copy of a whole web page. This is very useful for archiving family history web pages, which frequently disappear unexpectedly. Yahoo's My Web, <http://myweb.yahoo.com>, is another site following in the footsteps of del.icio.us.



Bookmark your websites!

IMAGE SHARING WEBSITES

Even more popular with genealogists is Flickr, www.flickr.com, the image-hosting online community. Using the simple tools available on the site, you can upload your photos to the web, tag them as in del.icio.us, and then share them in a number of ways. One of the ways community is built at Flickr is by users finding others taking and tagging



Genealogists love books and the Internet is a great way to connect with others who share the same books and interests.

similar pictures. You can add users with common interests to your lists of contacts and subscribe to the RSS feeds of their images. Flickr users working collaboratively with other family researchers can also establish a public or a private Group, where photos can be grouped together and a discussion board created to communicate with other group members. If you have a blog, you can easily add photos to it by using the “Blog this” button.

It is possible on Flickr to set privacy levels: Who can view your pictures, who can add comments to them and who can add notes and tags.

You automatically hold copyright to the photos you have taken, but you can allow others to use your photos under a Creative Commons license, a new alternative to classic copyright, which offers six default licenses as an alternative to full copyright. Creative Commons is fully explained on the site.

To direct others to your Flickr pages, you will add your own chosen “alias” to the URL: www.flickr.com/photos/.

To see what other genealogists are doing on Flickr, try searching for tags such as familytree (tags are one word only), genealogy, or more specifically by a family surname. Flickr is also a wonderful source for photographs of sites around the world, as many users share their travel snapshots. Try also searching for the name of a cemetery, church, town or village. For example, “highgatecemetery” brings up a slide show of beautiful photographs of this historic and grand London graveyard.

SOCIAL NETWORKING ON THE WEB

A social networking site of value to genealogy book lovers, (and what genealogist isn’t a lover of books?) is LibraryThing, www.librarything.com. This site connects people based on the books they share. The idea is to add the books you own by cataloguing them online using the library-quality data available on LibraryThing. You then add your own tags to describe each of your books. As you add your books, you will begin to see other Library Thing users who also own them. You can search for books on any topic and, again, see who owns those. Library Thing’s Vital Statistics page indicates that 12,022,912 books have been catalogued to date.

The Groups page allows you to search for a Group or create one of your own. There is already an active Genealogy@LT Group available to join. Here group members “share book lists, recommendations, triumphs and trials...”.

If you are a member of a small historical or genealogical society, LibraryThing is one way of cataloguing your library collection.

By now, you will have seen the common elements shared by these social networking sites: Tagging, the ability to find others who have chosen similar tags, the sharing with others, be it of bookmarks, photos or book titles, and group building with those holding similar interests. The end result in each case is a collaborative community of family historians or other hobbyists.

A new site devoted specifically to genealogy, which takes some of the elements of social networking and creates

an environment where users can collaboratively build a family tree, is Geni.com, www.geni.com. To begin, you enter your own first and last name and indicate your gender. A box appears that allows you to add a photo, as well as provide personal information to fill a profile. You are then given the opportunity to add first your mother and father and then other relatives, including an e-mail address for those relatives you would like to

You can share your bookmarks by giving family and fellow researchers a link, or you can share only those bookmarks you have tagged with certain words, such as a surname.

visit the site and fill in their branch of the family tree. Geni.com uses the e-mail you have provided to issue an invitation for them to do so. To combat privacy concerns, visitors to the site can only see their own family tree.

When the trees being built begin to overlap with those being built by other members of the site, Geni.com will offer the option to combine them. The site's ambitious goal is to use this methodology to "create a family tree of the whole world".

Genealogists have also made, what is to me, somewhat unexpected use of two of the more "far out" Web 2.0 tools, Second Life and YouTube.

Second Life, <http://secondlife.com>, is a three-dimensional, online, virtual world "imagined, created and owned by its inhabitants". There are currently more than four and a half million inhabitants and some of them are genealogists. Second Life looks much like the video games that teenage boys are so fond of, but there is no winning or losing in Second Life, simply people building lives that look very much like ones in the real world. And many of the things genealogists do in the real world can be done in Second Life. For example, going to libraries and going to lectures and exhibitions.

The Genealogy Research Center has its own building on Info Island (along with many libraries) with computers linked to web-based genealogy resources residents can use. As of the time of this writing, there was an exhibit of Irish Genealogy available, with links to many resources and an exhibit of photographic views of Ireland. There is a group, called "Genealogy Scribes", you can join, which currently has 76 members. Their goal is to bring genealogy sources to people in Second Life.

To experience Second Life yourself and explore what is there, you will need to create an avatar (a graphical representation of yourself in cyberspace) and spend a little time learning how to walk, sit and even fly, in order to move around this

extraordinary world. But for those who are interested in experiencing what is really new with genealogy and the Internet, this virtual world is well worth a visit.

YOUTUBE FOR GENEALOGISTS

YouTube, www.youtube.com, is the wildly popular site where people may upload their videos on any subject for others to view. Most well known for prank videos and faked commercials, there are some family historians who are uploading, what are most often unintentionally, funny or very boring videos. One features an extremely slow-moving description of one woman's family tree as she presents it to her grandson sitting on her lap. The narration is delivered in a monotone voice and, after a few family photos, the video ends with an unknown man seemingly asleep on a couch. My personal favorite consists of a camera simply panning a collection of the family group sheets of the presenter who has discovered he is descended from European royalty.

Accompanying the presentation is stirring martial music. This site, at this point, is best left for when some light relief is needed after a long evening of genealogical research!

There is a group called "Genealogy Scribes" you can join, which currently has 76 members. Their goal is to bring genealogy sources to people in Second Life.



Marian Press is a librarian at the University of Toronto. She teaches courses on the Internet and genealogy for the National Genealogical Institute and the Toronto Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society.



Networking with fellow genealogists and family historians, using the Web 2.0, will surely bring a smile to your face.