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Web 2.0 as a resource for academic and professional networking ¹

Introduction:

Most universities and university departments, research institutions, business and professional schools as well as individual scientists use the internet as for their public representation as well as for their individual exchange of information and communication. Yet, very often, websites remain static, internet use is rather unsystematic, and the potential for academic and professional networking that the new internet – often referred to as Web 2.0 and social software – has to offer is not exploited. The following introduction is intended to be an invitation to use Web 2.0 as a resource for academic and professional networking.

The text material, pictures and links you find here are the additional material for my at the presentation at the conference “Angewandte Soziologie in der Verwaltungswirtschaft” (translates: “applied sociology in administration”), organized by Carsten Stark, in Hof/Germany on march 16, 2007. The title of my presentation is “Onlinegestützte Ressourcen für professionelles Netzwerken” (translates: “online resources for professional networking”). In the presentation, I present various internet based tools which may serve as resources for the public activities that sociologists in academic research, academic teaching and the various applications that sociologist engage may serve as valuable tools. To be more concrete, I present and discuss weblogs, Wikiwebs, Online-Communities, Social Bookmarking and tagging and wrap it up as tools of professional networking. The presentation has five sections:

1. Typen sozialer Software
(English: types of social software)
2. Internettechnologie und soziale Praxis
(English: Internet technology and social practice)
3. Geistiges Eigentum und “Social Production”
(English: Intellectual property and social production)
4. Anwendung für Forschung, Lehre und professionelle Vernetzung
(English: applications for research, teaching and professional networking)
5. Die offene Universität (English: The open university)



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¹ I thank **Jan Schmidt** of „Forschungsstelle für neue Kommunikationsmedien“ (FONK) at the University of Bamberg for his helpful comments on a first draft of this text; let me also thank all the bloggers, members of my respective community networks and internet citizens from whom I learned while doing sozlog and putting this draft together.

1.1. Getting started - reading news and blogs



RSS is an abbreviation for ‘real simple syndication’. **RSS** is a technical tool to get news and commentary from the author directly to an audience or readership as they are published, such that intermediaries become obsolete. Readers just sign up to the RSS feed of a blog or site and obtain news and commentary instantly. An **RSS-feed** can be obtained and deciphered with help of a feed reader which keeps a reader updated on new posts. **RSS** allows users to compose their daily news package individually according to academic disciplines, professional and personal interests. Most newspapers, electronic media and Blogs offer RSS feeds.

1.2. Editing and writing academic blogs



Services such as www.blog.de, www.twoday.net and www.myspace.com (some in connection with community tools) allow internet publishers to create and edit their blog. It is not necessary to acquire knowledge in programming code (e.g. **HTML**, **XML**, **CSS**, **PHP**, **Javascript**) or to own server capacity. Authors can literally begin writing in five minutes.



Some bloggers edit their blogs using standalone software (e.g. **wordpress**, **movable type**, **serendipity**). Standalone software requires basic knowledge and a bit of experience in the programming of internet sites; server capacity is also necessary. On the other hand, bloggers using standalone software are in full control of their weblog when it comes to content, design, integration of additional functionality and services from providers outside their blog (**plugins**).



Group weblogs such as **crookedtimber**, **orgtheory** or **biz deanstalk** have some advantages: the relative effort for updating a weblog for each author is reduced, group weblogs allow authors to enter into a discourse, and they also foster the discursive character of weblog communication. Often, group blogs quickly attract a high number of readers, comments and trackbacks, thus help to enhance discussion within and across institutions, schools of thought, academic disciplines, cultures and time zones.



Weblogs in academic research serve as a public representation for an ongoing research project, e.g. **surveillance studies**. They create a public forum, tell readers about the project itself, discuss related issues, provide related material from relevant internet sites, allow internet users to subscribe to a blog's RSS feed, invite readers to comment and leave trackbacks. Thus, they develop an ongoing discourse on the content of an ongoing research project. Many research blogs manage to attract media attention both for the project and for the researcher.

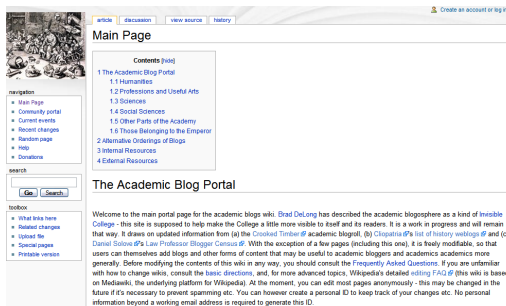


Weblogs in academic teaching, e.g. **mediasocietyblog** and the **digital ethnography** may serve as (1) a public representation of an ongoing lecture, seminar or academic course, (2) as an organizing tool to do a lecture, course or seminar with a large group, (3) as a powerful tool to enhance participants' interest, active role-taking, and contributions in an ongoing course. Finally, (4) a blog can be used as a tool to collect active feedback from the participants' perspective (online questionnaires can be integrated).

2. Wikiwebs



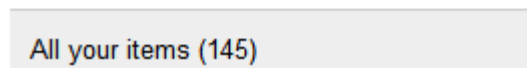
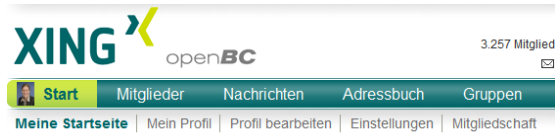
Wikiwebs are websites allowing users to write and modify a public website, such that a wikiweb is simplified – usually public – version of a **content management system**. Thanks to the Wikiweb technology, internet users can collaboratively set up, edit, write & update, enlarge and connect website on a given issue or project. Every change is documented and visible to other users. This way, wikiwebs have become a very efficient and valuable tool of collaborative knowledge management. The most well-known example is **Wikipedia**, another example is **academic blog portal**.



Originally constrained to the academia and limited to documentary purposes, the Wikiweb technology has become very popular in recent years as tools for online collaborative documentary and project management have been further elaborated. Wikiwebs are a very flexible technology since they can be installed both on the internet, on a company intranet as well as on a personal computer. Among the wikiweb categories are the simple **DokuWiki**, and the very elaborated **MediaWiki** (the technology behind wikipedia).

3. Online Communities

3.1. Getting connected



Among the multitude of online communities, some are explicitly designed to serve as online tools for professional networking. A typical example for professional networking online is **Xing**, a typical network related to offline campus and student life **StudiVZ**. **Monster** is related to the offline job market and **Betaplazes** to spacial relations and urban life.

Users sign up, create individual profiles (business profile, contact profile, personal information, guest book) and connect to other users e.g. on the basis of social ties offline, same university, organizational affiliations, professional or academic interests as well as supply & demand).

Another tool able to directly connect internet users are **online telephone services** such as **skype** and **instant messaging systems** such as **ICQ** or, again, **xing** where an instant messaging service is included for paying premium members. Users sign up, contact other users and communicate in real time: skype needs a microphone (better: microphone plus webcam) for the telephone function and also offers the instant messenger function; ICQ serves as a pure instant messenger.

Who will organize all the data on the internet? **XML** and internet users together create a social, culturally enriched and “knowing” internet. Using search engines or moving through the internet otherwise, users discover many websites, some of which are noteworthy for some or other reason. Providers such as **Del.icio.us**, **digg**, **reddit** or **Mr. Wong** help users collect, structure and share material online (e.g. related to organizational, professional, academic affiliations, to hobbies or interests) by **tagging sites** with labels that they choose such that the mass of internet websites creates an internet based collaborative social knowledge management. Each time they tag a new site, they teach the internet new information such that a “knowing internet” slowly emerges.



The internet relies heavily on written text as the primary mode of expression. On the other hand, it is very exhausting to read long text documents on the computer screen. Besides, some things can be better expressed, some content better presented with pictures or videos. Photo communities such as **flickr** allow users to upload, store, structure and share images. Video communities such as **YouTube** allow users to do the same with video material. Tagging photos and videos adds to the above mentioned internet based collaborative social knowledge management.

3.2. Integrate additional functionality and online communities

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<!DOCTYPE html PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD XHTML 1.0 Transitional//EN"
<html xmlns="http://www.w3.org/1999/xhtml">
<head>
<title>Nielsen BuzzMetrics' BlogPulse</title>
<meta http-equiv="Content-Type" content="text/html; charset=utf-
<link href="styles.css" rel="stylesheet" type="text/css" />
<script language="JavaScript" type="text/JavaScript">
<!--
function MM_preloadImages() { //v3.0
var d=document; if(d.images){ if(!d.MM_p) d.MM_p=new Array();
var i,j=d.MM_p.length,a=MM_preloadImages.arguments; for(i=0;
if (a[i].indexOf("#")!=0){ d.MM_p[j]=new Image; d.MM_p[j++].
}
```

For internet publishers using standalone software, the functionalities and services mentioned above (plus various others) can be integrated into their blog using **code**. Many providers of online communities, functionality and services offer specific **plugins**, that is, pieces of software that the user fits into the code of his or her own blog. Thus, a blog easily becomes a very complex cultural artefact including functionality and services that the visitor can see and access to as well as functionality and services not visible to the viewer (e.g. **spam filters**, **statistics**, **search meter**, **copyright** or **creative commons** claims).



The social web is constituted by a network of relations. The relevant technology is the hyperlink. While internet users are well informed on the outgoing links they create (**blogroll**, **links to posts** in other weblogs), important questions concerning their publicising activity focus on the question who links to them and what is the context of weblogs and articles linking to their blog.

Reputational services such as **technorati** and **blogpulse** keep internet publishers informed on numbers, context and sources of inbound links and also put their blogging activity in perspective in relation to the most successful (or: highest ranked) weblogs. Centrality and reputation of a blog vary with the number of inbound links that a blog manages to attract.

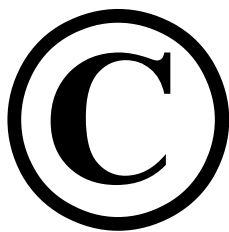
4. Creating your personal Online Identity

Creating an online identity is about setting up and editing a good, thoughtful combination of blogging technology, wikiwebs and community tools of one's choice (1) to serve an academic researcher, academic teacher or professional in the pursuit of his or her various projects, (2) to enable him or her to exchange information, knowledge and support with counterparts coming from other schools of thought, academic disciplines or located in other countries and timezones, (3) to create and further develop a public discourse on an academic discipline or area of study (4) to enhance his or her public reputation as a researcher, teacher or expert on a given issue. In an ideal case, all elements of a person's identity online are well integrated within one larger framework (e.g. a **weblog** or other profile) which is (1) under **complete control** of the person concerned, (2) its elements are mutually supportive such that viewers can obtain transparency regarding a person's **public activities**, (2) can enter into a discourse with him or her, (3) contact him or her using other electronic devices with respect to individual privacy.



An interesting tool for creating, organizing and further developing one's online identity are services such as **OpenID** and **Claim ID** serve users to (1) manage user names and passwords in their diverse online based services and communities and (2) manage their online reputation by claiming websites referring to research projects, teaching projects, business and personal projects that they have set up as well as reputational websites about them (e.g. **technorati** or **blogpulse** sites about them & their projects).

5. Copyright and Alternatives



Academics are familiar with **copyright**, a well-established legal structure by which they can claim ownership on text, data, audio, picture, video and software. While for many applications, copyright and intellectual property is the legal structure of choice that best the owner's interests, the "**all rights reserved**" **copyright** law has proven inappropriate for many applications within the digital culture. Copyright – as developed in the late 1990s – massively restrains the scope of action in terms of creativity for academic researchers, academic teachers, professionals and students. Readers, visitors and consumers may read and consume material they find online, but copyright law prohibits to publicly to copy, transmit and change (e.g. translate or further develop) this material.



An alternative for use on the internet is a **creativecommons** agreement: The author allows readers and visitors of his website or weblog to copy, distribute and transmit the work based on the conditions defined by the author. An **attribution-noncommercial-nonderives** licence permits users to copy, distribute and transmit the work under the condition that (1) the work is attributed as defined by the author, (2) the use is not commercial and (3) no changes are made. An **attribution-sharealike** licence permits users to copy, distribute and transmit the work under the condition that (1) the work is attributed as defined by the author and (2) if users alter, transform, or build upon the work, they may distribute the resulting work only under the same or similar license.

Sciencecommons is an initiative oriented toward the idea of a global open university and devoted to easing unnecessary barriers to the flow of scientific knowledge, technical information as well as relevant publications, data and software. The goal is to encourage stakeholders to create areas of free access and inquiry: a 'science commons' as the result of private agreements.

Literature recommendations:

- BENKLER, YOCHAI. 2006. *The Wealth of Networks. How Social Production transforms markets and freedom*. Yale: Yale University Press.
www.benkler.org/wealth_of_networks/index.php?title=Download_PDFs_of_the_book
- KANTER, JÖRG. 2007. "Web 2.0. Werkzeuge für die Wissenschaft."
Internet: <http://www.schockwellenreiter.de/gems/web2science.pdf>
- KRÖMER, JAN UND EVRIM SEN. 2006. *NO COPY. Die Welt der digitalen Raubkopie*. Leipzig: Tropen.
- SCHMIDT, JAN. 2006. *Weblogs. Eine kommunikationssoziologische Studie*. Konstanz: UVK.
- WERLE, RAYMUND. 2005. „Der Schutz des geistigen Eigentums in der Medien- und Softwareindustrie im Interessen- und Wertkonflikt.“ In: Woesler (Hg.) *Ethik der Informationsgesellschaft*. Bochum: Europäischer Universitätsverlag, S. 73-104.
<http://www.mpifg.de/people/we/Links/IPRkurz.pdf>

Internet resources:

- ACADEMIC BLOG PORTAL http://www.academicblogs.net/wiki/index.php/Main_Page (Wikiweb, Übersicht)
- BETAPLAZES <http://beta.plazes.com/> (Online community, spatial relations)
- BLOGPULSE www.blogpulse.com (Online Community, Reputation)
- BIZ DEANSTALK <http://www.deanstalk.net/> (Weblog)
- CLAIMID <http://www.claimid.com/> (Online Community, Social Bookmarking)
- CREATIVECOMMONS www.creativecommons.org (Licencing)
- CROOKEDTIMBER <http://www.crookedtimber.org/> (Weblog)
- DEL.ICIO.US <http://del.icio.us> (Online Community, Social Bookmarking)
- DIGITAL ETHNOGAPHY <http://www.mediatedcultures.net/ksudigg/> (Weblog)
- FLICKR www.flickr.com (Online Community, photo sharing)
- ICQ (sprich "I seek you") www.icq.com (Online Community, Instant Messaging)
- MEDIASOCIETYBLOG <http://media.societyblog.de/> (Weblog)
- MONSTER <http://www.monster.de/> (Online Community, job market)
- OPENID <http://openid.net/> (Online Community, Digital Identity)
- ORGTHEORY <http://orgtheory.wordpress.com/> (Weblog)
- RSS Feed reader <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feedreader> (Wikiweb, Übersicht)
- SCIENCECOMMONS www.sciencecommons.org (Licencing)
- SKYPE www.skype.com (Community, Online-telephone)
- SOZIOLOGIE UND IHRE MEDIALE AUFMERKSAMKEIT <http://soziologische-aufmerksamkeit.blogspot.com/> (Weblog)
- SOZLOG <http://sozlog.de> (Weblog)
- STUDI VZ www.studivz.net (Online Community)
- SURVEILLANCE STUDIES <http://www.surveillance-studies.org/blog/> (Weblog)
- TECHNORATI www.technorati.com (Online Community, Reputation)
- XING www.xing.com (Online Community, Professional Networking)
- YOUTUBE www.youtube.com (Online Community, Video)

Video recommendations:

- Digital Ethnography <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6gmP4nk0EOE>
- NOCOPY http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3Q_4ZBVwWc (in German)