

HERE'S to the CLASS of WEB 2.0

Almost everywhere you go teachers are learning about Web 2.0, or using Web 2.0, or asking, “WHAT IS WEB 2.0?” Is it a new program? Is it a website? Where can it be found? The answer is...none of the above! Before we talk about what Web 2.0 is we should first know what Web 1.0 was, and will there be a Web 3.0?

In the **1990**'s the Internet was flooded with websites containing information. Those websites were viewed primarily to retrieve information. The viewer was passive and unengaged. The data that flowed was in a “ONE-WAY” direction, thus, giving birth to **Web 1.0**. These websites were used to search for articles, read about the latest news, and find out things you wanted to know. They were built by “techies” who used technical language, such as, HTML (hypertext markup language, which is a set of tags and rules for using them in developing hypertext documents), or FTP (file transfer protocol, a language that allows users to copy files between their local system and any system they can reach on the network).¹

2004 saw the birth of **new** web tools. People with NO technical programming skills began adding content to the web. Through online web-based programs they published journals, put photographs on the Internet, created slideshows for multimedia presentations or bought and sold items on online auctions. The web suddenly became a “TWO-WAY” street where everyday people were creating the content.

2007 ushered in a second generation of websites, AKA –Read/Write Web. These websites were the breeding ground for creative and engaging educational endeavors. Teachers launched their classrooms into the 21st Century. Students feverishly created content on the web. They began collaborating with other students socially and educationally. Students started showcasing their work not only locally but to global audiences.

WEB 2.0 TOOLS – is commonly associated with web *applications* that facilitate *interactive information sharing, interoperability, user-centered design and collaboration* on the **World Wide Web (WWW)**. The term “Web 2.0” was coined in 1999 by Darcy DiNucci, in her article, “Fragmented Future.”² “Web 2.0 is many similar and different websites with the same purpose...to allow its users to interact with other users or to change website content, in contrast to non-interactive websites where users are limited to the passive viewing of information that is provided to them.”³ Alexander Peters explains it nicely; “One of the primary features of Web 2.0 is multi-directional communication (Alexander 2006). Web 2.0 sites often include two-way and multi-way communication by multiple authors of content instead of the one-way broadcast communication common to web sites in the 1990s.”⁴ The good thing about Web 2.0 tools is that they are easy to use, most of them are FREE, and they foster communication and literacy skills that are required in the 21st Century.

TIM O'REILLY - Although he did not “coin” the term Web 2.0 it is usually associated with Tim O'Reilly. He is regarded by many to be the best computer book publisher in the world. Web 2.0, as we know it now, had its inception at his conference in 2004 when Tim O'Reilly introduced the world to his media-based **application** ideas, in which, users could build their content on the web instead of on their desktops. Examples of Web 2.0 include web-based communities, [hosted services](#), [web applications](#), ([word processing](#), [spreadsheets](#), [databases](#), [bookmark sites](#)), [social-networking sites](#), [video-sharing sites](#), [wikis](#), [blogs](#), [mashups](#), and [folksonomies](#).⁵

¹ Definitions obtained from AudioEnglish.net. <http://www.audioenglish.net/dictionary/ftp.htm#top>

² Wikipedia, History: From Web 1.0 to Web 2.0.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_2.0#History: From Web 1.0 to 2.0

³ Wikipedia, *ibid*.

⁴ Alexander Peters, author, 2007. *Web 2.0: Web Services Mesh-up*

⁵ Wikipedia, *ibid*.

WHAT IT IS NOT - It should be made clear that Web 2.0 is NOT a new version of the World Wide Web. Web 2.0 is NOT a single website containing applications and tools. Everyone is NOT into Web 2.0. There are critics of Web 2.0 who claim it is NOT doing anything new that some websites were already doing before the concept took hold.

NOW YOU KNOW! – Web 2.0 is a unique CONCEPT! It is a diversity of many new and exciting **applications** that uses certain techniques, technologies and concepts. Web-based applications and interactive websites are springing up all over the Internet so rapidly it is not easy to keep up with them all. It has a greater capacity for collaboration among Internet users and content creators. Websites, in which, you can auction your house and bid for someone else's. You may plan a family trip, post your vacation pictures and invite your friends to view and comment on them. You can ask others for advice or help on how-to do something and get a variety of suggestions from the community-at-large. You can share documents and edit them with your colleagues without going to the office. Teachers can have students place their work on the web and mark them from anywhere, giving students immediate feedback.

WEB 3.0 and the FUTURE – There is no “nailed down” definition for Web 3.0, yet! Many have labeled it with their own definitions, but I would venture to say it is still slowly taking shape in its structure, nature, appearance and identity. Its direction seems to be in the direction of software embedded in the browser (API- Application Programming Interface). “...a software system designed to support computer-to-computer interaction over the Internet.”⁶ This browser will contain an individual's profile of likes and dislikes. It will know your tastes in restaurants, movie preferences, travel haunts, and yield intellectual responses. Web 3.0 is often referred to as **Semantic Web**.

SEMANTEC WEB – Tim Berners-Lee is the man who invented the (first) World Wide Web (not Al Gore as he has claimed in the past). In essence, the **Semantic Web** is a place where machines can read web pages much as we humans read them, a place where search engines and software agents can better troll the Net and find what we're looking for. "It's a set of standards that turns the Web into one big **database**," says Nova Spivack, CEO of Radar Networks, one of the leading voices of this new-age **Internet**.⁷ A machine that reads websites for us is mind boggling! Can we say Web 2.0 is a term already outdated, and we are only just learning about it? Startling!!! Still, more and more people are engaging in such websites. Teachers and students alike are already steeped in its treasures of communication and collaborative creativity. Web 2.0 is a phenomenon spreading like fire over dried brush.

THE COLLECTIVE - If you were a Star Trek fan you know the “Borg” referred to them as the “Collective.” They travel from planet to planet assimilating the inhabitants and their minds into ONE intergalactic collective mind. They mentally communicate and interactively hear, speak and react as one intelligence. Tim O'Reilly sees Web 2.0 technology in a similar way. He calls it **harnessing COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE...** “turning the web into a kind of global brain...”

MAKE UP YOUR OWN MIND – I can not add much more for users to understand without the user experiencing the phenomenon for her/him. Find a few friends who are involved and join them on the web. You might be pleasantly surprised how much fun it can be and what a great source of information flows in the community. BUT, as an educator I have only one thought to be pondered. Whether Web 2.0 is for you and your students or not for you and your students, is not the issue. The essential issue is **how** educators will use it in the classroom!

<http://www.solutionwatch.com/512/back-to-school-with-the-class-of-web-20-part-1/>

⁶ Practical eCommerce: Insights for Online Merchants... [http://www.practicalecommerce.com/articles/464- Basic-Definitions-Web-1-0-Web-2-0-Web-3-0](http://www.practicalecommerce.com/articles/464-Basic-Definitions-Web-1-0-Web-2-0-Web-3-0), by Brian Getting, April 18, 2007

⁷ <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2102852,00.asp>