Over the last year, Librarian Sarah Polkinghorne from the University of Alberta and I have worked on an analysis of the literature in library studies and the field of education to identify the discourses—the messages, themes and unique communication patterns—related to the concepts of information literacy and Web 2.0. The academic library is keen to exploit Web 2.0 in the improvement of its services. By exploring the discourses surrounding information literacy and Web 2.0, we hope to help academic libraries achieve their educative goals.

**Definitions**

Critical to this discourse analysis are the following two definitions: information literacy pertains to that set of skills and understandings that are needed to work capably with information. Information literacy deals with our capacity to find information and evaluate it. It also involves using information ethically—avoiding plagiarism, using citation styles correctly and realizing that strong academic work is built on pre-existing scholarship.

The other critical term in the discourse analysis is Web 2.0, which is also known as the “Social Web” or “social software.” Web 2.0 is the manifestation of the Internet that is user-generated. Blogs, wikis and photo/video-sharing sites (e.g. YouTube) are examples of Web 2.0 applications. This type of material is said to be user-generated because the content of these applications—for example, someone’s Facebook profile or video—comes from the users themselves rather than from Web programmers.

**Methodology**

The amount of material on the open Internet on this topic is constantly growing. To make it more manageable, we limited our analysis to formally published literature in English that was available through library studies and education databases. From our results, we chose 81 articles that specifically made a connection between information literacy and Web 2.0. Themes, unique vocabulary terms, professional trends and assumptions were identified, and from these patterns we derived a number of significant discourses.

**Findings**

The first phase of the information literacy/Web 2.0 discourse analysis was completed in 2007. Here are the two most significant discourses that were observed:

**Marketing vs. Teaching:** The literature in library studies contained many articles of an applied nature that dealt with the issue of implementing Web 2.0 technologies as a means of attracting library users. These articles revealed a marketing discourse inside both public and academic libraries.

This particular discourse prevailed in the library studies literature over a discussion of using Web 2.0 technologies to teach information literacy. On the other hand, the teaching discourse was much more obvious in the education literature, where articles tended to portray social software as a teaching tool of information and language skills.

**Web 2.0 and Constructivism:** Another significant discourse related to constructivist learning theory prevails in the education literature. This discourse identifies social software applications as a means of enabling students to construct or develop their own understanding of information skills. In the library studies literature, this discourse is only beginning to emerge.

**Next steps**

Currently, the Web 2.0/information literacy discourse analysis is moving into a second phase in which resources on the open Internet (instead of articles within subscription databases) will be examined. It will be interesting to observe if marketing, teaching or constructivist discourses will be found in the library studies literature, or if new discursive messages will appear.