

Library 2.0 and overdue books

 By [Derek Abdinor](#)

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The web was initially intended as a network of references, much like a library. The rules of measuring the effectiveness of network being the size of the overall network and connection between the nodes, one could say the web has grown exponentially. Is it possible to still think of the web as a library of information?

This library does not have prohibitive accessibility. In fact, it is very simple to produce content, publish it and submit it to the library (everything is accepted) which then categorises the content into its system.

Increasing body of knowledge

The more authors, the more books. With the body of knowledge increasing, references and citations among works increases, too. Citing references to support your own thought indicates not only a depth of study but a confidence in your assertions: "Don't just believe what I say, see for yourself" (Yochai Benkler, *Wealth of Networks*, 2006).

The referrals between the books brings authors together, many of them collaborate on building tools to make publishing easier and then offer it freely to everyone else! Some band together to create an encyclopaedia that is massive, free and open to all users to add and comment on. Readers struggle to sift through the volume of work produced, and therefore use each other as filters: they borrow each other's bookmarks and they recommend the best articles they have read, using a voting system so that a newcomer can judge the popularity or newsworthiness of the article before even engaging with it.

Readers submit their daily journals, films, events and all other media available into the library, which then struggles to index all of it in a meaningful way. The problem is compounded when authors find that they can reference maps in another aisle instantly from their pages, videos can connect to a voting system and people start bringing their scrapbooks with all pieces of media into the library for indexing.

The indexing system becomes less relevant, and authors then create self-appointed catalogues for their content, tagging it with keywords. Now one can search the system for all instances of certain keywords and not retrieve random, coincidental groupings of your search terms.

Readers are authors

Not only are there hundreds of millions of authors, readers are now authors, too. Through commenting on and organising the works of authors, or sending pages to colleagues and friends and discussing them in groups or journals, they re-author the initial message. The reading room has become the read/writing room; the library has become a communal area, a

commons of information production, where reading a book only makes sense if there is an action by the reader.

Imagine a member of this library who needs to get information on the Cape Vulture for reasons unknown to us. She may be daunted by all the methods of information retrieval or she may be empowered by it. Her options include:

- Searching down the aisles until she has narrowed her search to a few books, then flipping them open and browsing.
- Using the cataloging system, she can find an expert who has written the definitive book. It may be only 10 years out of date but is the accumulation of many years worth of study.
- She can find a reputable compendium, such as *Roberts' Guide*. While the material is vast on birds, the Cape Vulture occupies only an entry. She knows, however, that this entry is bound to be up-to-date and rigorously proofed.
- She can view the entry for Cape Vulture under the reader-author-generated encyclopaedia. If she is unsure about the legitimacy of the entry, she can cross check with other sources or view the debates surrounding this entry.
- She can view the updated journals of specialists in the field, and decide for herself if they can add value to her quest. She could ask them questions or comment on their posts.
- Using the system, she can view all media related to the Cape Vulture, from videos tagged with "Cape Vulture" to audio clips of their mating cries. She can immerse herself in this study, and while taking a long time, she will be aware of many other issues around the topic and get a good general understanding.

Not up to you

How you find information online is a matter of preference, and it's really up to you. How people find information on you online is not really up to you.

Your company/brand/reputation is the Cape Vulture, and you have most likely published a website (written by experts) which is to be found at a predictable location online. However, your web presence exists in online news, Google page 2, a bookmark, Facebook group, online video, Hello Peter or as a blog post from someone who is mentioning unpredictable things about you.

The networked web means that good news and bad news will travel at equal speeds, but they will choose many different paths to disseminate. In the library, people are always talking and always listening, it's become the last place to have a quiet read.

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