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**THE TECH SET**

Ellyssa Kroski, Series Editor

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# Microblogging and Lifestreaming in Libraries

Robin M. Hastings



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# FOREWORD

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Welcome to volume 3 of The Tech Set.

*Microblogging and Lifestreaming in Libraries* is a start-to-finish passport to using such services as Twitter, Friendfeed, and Tumblr to engage and communicate with library patrons. Veteran micro-blogger Robin Hastings leads readers through how to use these cutting-edge social media applications to keep patrons updated, market the library, and build community. This comprehensive field guide covers everything from how to feed blog posts into Twitter, feed tweets into a Web site, and utilize Twitter for library events, to ways to incorporate these tools into your organization's marketing strategy.

The idea for The Tech Set book series developed because I perceived a need for a set of practical guidebooks for using today's cutting-edge technologies specifically within libraries. When I give talks and teach courses, what I hear most from librarians who are interested in implementing these new tools in their organizations are questions on how exactly to go about doing it. A lot has been written about the benefits of these new 2.0 social media tools, and at this point librarians are intrigued but they oftentimes don't know where to start.

I envisioned a series of books that would offer accessible, practical information and would encapsulate the spirit of a 23 Things program but go a step further—to teach librarians not only how to use these programs as individual users but also how to plan and implement particular types of library services using them. I thought it was important to discuss the entire life cycle of these initiatives, including everything from what it takes to plan, strategize, and gain

buy-in, to how to develop and implement, to how to market and measure the success of these projects. I also wanted them to incorporate a broad range of project ideas and instructions.

Each of the ten books in The Tech Set series was written with this format in mind. Throughout the series, the “Implementation” chapters, chock-full of detailed project instructions, will be of major interest to all readers. These chapters start off with a basic “recipe” for how to effectively use the technology in a library, and then build on that foundation to offer more and more advanced project ideas. I believe that readers of all levels of expertise will find something useful here as the proposed projects and initiatives run the gamut from the basic to the cutting-edge.

I had the chance to interview Robin Hastings in spring 2008 about the innovative ways she was using Twitter at the Missouri River Regional Library. During the process I learned that Robin is one of those people who just “gets it”—she is incredibly savvy about the latest social media technology and can translate that knowledge into concrete strategies for using those tools in libraries. If you’re contemplating a microblogging or lifestreaming initiative in your library, you’ll want to consult this book.

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**Ellyssa Kroski** is an Information Services Technologist at Barnard College as well as a writer, educator, and international conference speaker. She is an adjunct faculty member at Long Island University, Pratt Institute, and San Jose State University where she teaches LIS students about emerging technologies. Her book *Web 2.0 for Librarians and Information Professionals* was published in February 2008, and she is the creator and Series Editor for The Tech Set 10-volume book series. She blogs at iLibrarian and writes a column called “Stacking the Tech” for *Library Journal’s* Academic Newswire.

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# PREFACE

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What are you doing *right* now? This is the fundamental question that drives microblogging and lifestreaming Web 2.0 applications. The most advanced libraries in the world are utilizing Web instant notification services to communicate with patrons, staff, and other libraries about news that is happening now. Staying informed with up-to-the-second information allows for maximum efficiency and streamlined productivity, goals for libraries navigating today's Web 2.0 universe.

Simply put, *Microblogging and Lifestreaming in Libraries* begins by defining the characteristics of microblogging and lifestreaming applications, followed by ways for all librarians to plan and implement them at your libraries. The purpose of microblogging (micro-Web-logging) is instant communication via short written messages or blogs, which are then posted publicly on the Web, sent through an Instant Message (IM) service, sent to a desktop application or e-mail, and/or texted to your cell phone. The true power of this form of communication comes from the ability to send your message through one or all of these outlets at the same time, allowing for maximum visibility. With microblogging, if your library needs to quickly get out the message that it will be closed because of a water main break, everyone, everywhere, will know. Lifestreaming applications (also referred to as "social aggregators") combine status updates (microblogs from various applications) into one interface. Lifestreaming applications not only allow you to view all of your social activities in one spot and with one interface, but they also allow you to follow and view other users and their updates from the services they share on the aggregator's site.

Libraries use Twitter and other microblogging applications like Tumblr and lifestreaming applications like FriendFeed every day to reach out to their patrons, donors, and elected officials to get information and advocacy materials out fast. Other libraries use it to get the word out about just how great they are! Still others use it to announce library programs and special events or just to converse with patrons in an incredibly cost-effective way.

## ▶ ORGANIZATION AND AUDIENCE

Twitter, Plurk, Identi.ca, and Yammer are all Web 2.0 applications that enable users to communicate with each other in a short, concise way. For those who are unfamiliar with these services, the first chapters that follow explain what they do, how to set up an account, and then how to use them. Subsequent chapters cover how to integrate your microblogging and other social networking services (such as Facebook) into one lifestreaming interface.

Chapter 1 introduces today's current microblogging and lifestreaming applications and helps you determine which are right for your library. Chapter 2 assists you in setting up a plan for implementing the appropriate applications, including how to convince resistant staff and how to create new user accounts. Chapter 3 describes the step-by-step process for implementing your plans. Chapter 4 discusses marketing and ways to get the word out. Chapter 5 highlights microblogging and lifestreaming best practices, and Chapter 6 covers how to measure and quantify the success of your implementation efforts. A "Recommended Resources" chapter provides excellent supplemental information for those still wanting to learn more about these technologies.

To those that haven't used them, these services seem trivial for library applications. Many people, when first presented with the idea of Twitter—or any other microblogging or lifestreaming application—feel that it is silly and not appropriate for professional work applications. *Microblogging and Lifestreaming in Libraries* will guide you on how to communicate the tremendous potential of these services for enhancing user services and then outline the

most effective and professional way to put your library at the forefront of library Web 2.0 communication.