
One potato, two potato: 'Mashed Library', two years in



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Mashed Library is both a movement and a series of unconferences¹, organised by librarians and proudly self-identified 'shambrarians': non-librarians working in libraries². Mashed Library is about 'bringing together interested people and doing interesting stuff with libraries and technology'.³ The 'mashed' part of the name is derived from the notion of 'mashing together' data from different sources to create Web applications greater than the sum of their parts.⁴ The first Mashed Library or 'mashlib' event took place in 2008, at Birkbeck, University of London. Since then Mashed Library unconferences have sprung up in Bath, Birmingham, Edinburgh, Huddersfield (twice) and Liverpool. The most recent Mashed Library unconference, 'Pancakes and mash', took place on Shrove Tuesday, 8 March 2011, at the University of Lincoln.

For his role in kick-starting the movement⁵ library consultant Owen Stephens⁶ has been awarded the tongue-in-cheek title 'Father of Mashed Libraries' by mashlib regulars.

There is no committee and no permission is required: anyone can organise a Mashed Library event,⁷ and the enthusiasm of people from a range of different library sectors (academic, public, commercial) has been an essential part of the movement's success. Mashlib events tend towards the very informal, and a vein of surrealist humour

runs throughout. Since 'Mash Oop North' in 2009⁸ each event in turn has had its own punning nickname on the 'mash' theme.

Mashlib events are discussed, organised and publicised through the Mashed Library social networking site⁹ and wiki¹⁰. Use of social media (particularly twitter, and often using the #mashlib hashtag) amongst delegates is almost universal. Blogs are also used used to raise interest and awareness, and external sponsorship is sought to keep delegate costs to a minimum.

It's not necessary to be an IT specialist to get something out of a Mashed Library event; techies and non-techies alike are welcome, and many interesting ideas have arisen from conversations between librarians, programmers, students and others. That said, an interest in library technology is assumed, and a laptop or other portable device is de rigeur! As an illustration of the breadth of attendees that mashlib events attract, the recent event at Lincoln had 54 delegates; there were five company reps, four heads of service or other senior library staff, six systems librarians, fourteen assistant or subject librarians, five students, five e-resources librarians, three cataloguers, three repository managers or staff, seven IT staff and two educational development specialists.

A few of the 'themes' that have been explored at past mashlib events include: using maps to explore library collections (Birmingham), open source library software (Edinburgh), the use of Radio-Frequency ID (RFID) tags and QR codes (Huddersfield), and using Web 2.0 services to campaign for public libraries (Lincoln).

For a comprehensive overview of library data mashups, see the 2009 book by library technology enthusiast Nicole C Engard¹¹ and its accompanying website¹². Details of future events, along with a mashlib event 'cookbook' for organisers, are available at: <http://www.mashedlibrary.com/>

NOTES

- 1 Wikipedia, *Unconference*. Available at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unconference> Accessed 11 June 2011
- 2 *Shambrarians International*. Available at <http://www.shambrarian.org/> Accessed 11 June 2011
- 3 Mashed Library. Available at <http://www.mashedlibrary.com/> Accessed 11 June 2011
- 4 Wikipedia. *Mashup (web application hybrid)*. Available at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

Mashup_%28web_application_hybrid%29
Accessed 11 June 2011

- 5 O Stephens 'Mashed libraries? Would you be interested?', *Overdue ideas* 1 July (2008) Available at http://www.meanboyfriend.com/overdue_ideas/ Accessed 11 June 2011
- 6 O Stephens, *Owen Stephens Consulting*, 2010. Available at <http://www.ostephens.com/> Accessed 11 June 2011
- 7 *Mashed library*. Available at <http://www.mashedlibrary.com/> Accessed 11 June 2011
- 8 *Mash oop north*. Available at <http://mashlib09.wordpress.com/> Accessed 11 June 2011
- 9 *Mashed library*. Available at <http://www.mashedlibrary.com/> Accessed 11 June 2011
- 10 *Mashed library wiki*. Available at <http://www.mashedlibrary.com/wiki/> Accessed 11 June 2011
- 11 N C Engard, *Library mashups: exploring new ways to deliver library data* London: Facet Publishing, 2009
- 12 *Library mashups*. Available at <http://mashups.web2learning.net/> Accessed 11 June 2011