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Review of Library Mashups: Exploring New Ways to Deliver Library Data

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Review of *Library Mashups: Exploring New Ways to Deliver Library Data*

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Nicole Engard's *Library Mashups* offers a compilation of successful mashups from a variety of libraries including Yale University, Temple University, and Manchester City Library as well as companies such as LibLime. Mashups are web applications that use free and/or fee data (images, citation information, maps, etc.)—perhaps even several sets of data—and combine them to create new content. Perhaps one of the most common examples is a Google map that shows the locations of libraries in a region or system. Engard is a Library Journal's Mover & Shaker for 2007, she is currently employed at ByWater Solutions as Director of Open Source Education, and she has published a second book Practical Open Source Software for Librarians in September 2010. She also is a regular columnist for Collaborative Librarianship.

The first several chapters of the book provide the technical background while later chapters present the various mashup projects. All readers will want to review chapter 4, in which Thomas Berevik presents important considerations like privacy and the rights of the user that should be discussed before implementing mashups. Depending upon your level of technology knowledge you may still need to look up a few words or concepts even after consulting the glossary provided in the book.

The book provides numerous low-tech, free, easily implemented examples of how you can mashup data to enhance your users' experience. For example, you can link photos of your library, events, and people from a Flickr account to your library website so that each time a photo is added to your Flickr account, the photos on your website are automatically updated. Suddenly simple is dynamic and your users see a fresh view of your library each time they visit your website with minimal effort on your part.

Another convenient tool described in *Library Mashups* is Yahoo! Pipes, which is free. Yahoo! Pipes allows you to harvest data from multiple sources, manipulate or reformat it, and output the mashuped data in several forms e.g., RSS. The advantage of Yahoo! Pipes is that it has several ways to gather data, even when a program or website may not have an Application Programming Interface (API). An API allows for the interaction of multiple software applications. Think of an API as a translator for someone who speaks only English to communicate with someone who speaks only Italian.

Library Interact is a blog that librarians from public, academic, and special libraries throughout Australia work collaboratively to provided content and maintain. They have created several mashups to enhance their blog, including blogroll (central register of Australian library blogs), citation aggregator (list of bookmarks from contributing librarians), and diverse group tag cloud (cloud tag of contributors blogs to determine what is currently a hot topic). Each mashup Library Interact created is truly a collaborative endeavor as the mashups started as an idea from a group member, and then the larger group determined if it was appropriate and necessary. Once it was determined by the group as a good project, they worked to implement it. This could include any number of group members as their skill sets are diverse, some provided programming skills, well others provided support and suggests, and some helped test projects until they had a working mashup.

Other mashup ideas included in *Library Mashups* are ways to make your catalog data more accessible and even more usable with the assistance of Blacklight (an open source OPAC) LibraryThing,(an online catalog and social networking for all book lovers), ‡biblios.net (web-based catalog), or SOPAC (online development to enhance users' interaction with the catalog). Maps, images, and repositories are leveraged in interesting and unique ways to bring information to users such as the Repository Mashup Map. The Repository Mashup Map utilizes Google Maps and information from the Registry of Open Access Repositories (ROAR) and the Directory of Open Access Repositories (OpenDOAR) to provide access to intuitional repositories at universities throughout the world. Library services and resources are enhanced. For example, the Ohio Public Library Information Network (OPLIN) developed a federate search engine for their consortium collection of databases known as the Ohio Web Library to provide a single interface for 250 public libraries. They utilized the open source product paxpar2 from Index Data.

Mashups are fun, inexpensive and can be deceptively simple to implement. Whether you want to enhance your catalog, create a map of where books are located, add photos to your website, or learn about tools that may help you create your own mashup, *Library Mashups* is a helpful resource.

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Engard, Nicole, Editor. *Library Mashups: Exploring New Ways to Deliver Library Data*. Medford, N.J.: Information Today, 2009.