

What in the world is Web 2.0?

In Acts 17 the apostle Paul addressed the people of Athens at the Areopagus. In biblical times the Areopagus was the prominent public forum for debating ideas in Greek society. Paul used this dynamic public forum to communicate his message about the one true God.

Today's public forum is without a doubt the Web. Among the hottest phrases in current technology is "Web 2.0". We're hearing this phrase a great deal, but what does it mean? The World Wide Web is not software and has no "release versions," so the phrase is a catchword describing the next evolution of the Web.

In our first experience with the Web, we discovered that Web sites were online libraries or stores. You visited a site for information or goods. You didn't really have the expectation of participating in the Web site; you were simply there to read or purchase.

Then the social networking aspect emerged. Message boards, chat rooms, forums and blogs (Web Logs or Web Journals) began to appear and receive enormous attention. Online communities were shaped around affinities or agendas.

Web 2.0 is evolving under the premise of active participation. People are no longer merely offering a static billboard of their opinions. The environment is organic. Readers can add their own opinions and actively contribute to a developing message, creating a more dynamic platform. Many believe this new "nature" of the Web will facilitate better and more organized technology and information management. Perhaps more importantly, Web 2.0 is believed to offer the individual increased power and influence.

So what does all this mean to the church? In a word: responsibility. Christians have always had the responsibility of presenting solid, compelling, relevant apologetics. Web 2.0 is creating more opportunities and better means to communicate with a global community. The Church is now responsible for *responding* to these ever increasing opportunities.

To effectively take advantage of the opportunities offered by Web 2.0 you need the proper tools. Look for companies that balance cutting-edge innovation with disciplined, proven track records. Look for tools that are flexible to your ministry approach and designed to enhance communication.

What in the world is Web 2.0? It's the latest manifestation of the Areopagus. Paul used the public forum of his day to connect to the culture around him. Will you?

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