

# Let's Talk 2.0

*Whether it's Web 2.0 or literacy 2.0, it's a whole new way of thinking.*

**Michele Knobel  
and Dana Wilber**

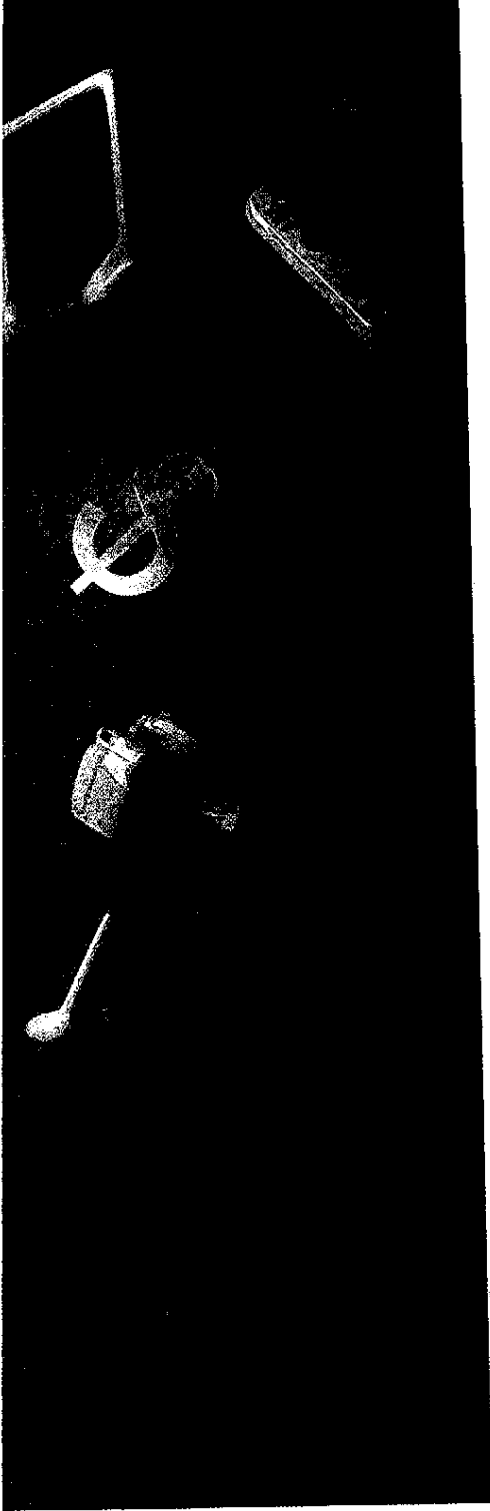
**T**o understand what the term *literacy 2.0* means, it's necessary to think of it as a new mind-set—or a new *ethos*—as well as a new practice.

To begin, however, it's useful to look at the concept of Web 2.0 as opposed to Web 1.0.

Web 2.0 describes a business model whereby Internet companies actually provide a *service* rather than sell prod-

ucts or promote ready-made, static artifacts.

For example, Ofoto—Web 1.0—was designed to sell digital-to-paper photo processing to users. This venture did not have staying power. In contrast, Web 2.0's Flickr is a user-generated content management system designed simply as a host for photo sharing. It accrues its revenue through site-based advertising. Web 2.0 businesses use



### Three Components of 2.0

A Web 2.0 ethos values and promotes three interlocking functions or practices: participation, collaboration, and distribution. Amateurs and hobbyists can participate in the production of media on an unprecedented scale, thanks to online services for managing user-generated content and increasingly affordable editing software. The Internet makes room for all kinds of interests and affinities, and more and more online services are making it possible for people to leave comments, review posted work, and respond to others' opinions in truly participatory ways. Blogs and their

hosting spaces; second, in terms of tapping into distributed expertise and knowledge. User-generated content sites like YouTube.com and AnimeMusicVideos.org have facilitated a significant shift for everyday people, from simply consuming media to actively producing media for real and interested audiences, no matter how small or esoteric.

Access to distributed knowledge and expertise occurs by means of the Internet's extended networks and in affinity spaces online. Groups formed around shared interests can collate and disperse information online to help those who might otherwise not have

## Outside school, many students are accomplished authors, filmmakers, animators, and recording artists.

comment functions are a case in point, as are fan fiction sites and their provisions for reviewer feedback.

Online multiuser writing and remix spaces support collaboration. Wikis; collaborative blogs; massively multi-player online games; Creative Commons music and video archives that encourage users to remix existing works (see <http://ccmixter.org>); and free or almost-free communication media (for example, Internet telephony and instant messaging) all support varied forms of joint text production or provide the means for completing complex tasks even when working with relative strangers.

The third component, distribution, operates on two dimensions from a Web 2.0 perspective: first, on the scale of sharing resources and relationships made possible by digital networks and

access to such knowledge (for example, in health issue support groups or alternative news reporting groups). These same networks also make it possible for users to access a range of information about and opinions on new developments in any number of fields.

### From Web 2.0 to Literacy 2.0

The new ethos of Web 2.0 holds true for literacy 2.0. The "twoness" of literacy 2.0 signals that it is meaningfully different from literacy 1.0 or analog forms of literacy. People are appropriating digital applications, networks, and services; and they are developing ways of reading, writing, viewing, listening, and recording that embody this 2.0 ethos. Literacy 2.0 necessarily involves extensive participation, collaboration, and the distribution of expertise and "intelligence," along with widely

enabling services—such as the Google suite of services, YouTube, Wikipedia, and the like—that live on the Web rather than on individual computers; that is, they are part of our "Webtops" and not our desktops.

The shift to Web 2.0 is not simply the development of new ways of doing things, as in an upgrade. Rather, it's an entirely new worldview (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006).

## Literacy 2.0: Online Resources

**Blogger** ([www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com)): A free blog hosting service.

**Delicious** ([www.delicious.com](http://www.delicious.com)): A free social, Internet bookmarking service.

**Fanfiction.net** ([www.fanfiction.net](http://www.fanfiction.net)): A public affinity space devoted to writing and reviewing fan fiction.

**Freeplay Music** ([www.freeplaymusic.com](http://www.freeplaymusic.com)): Music and sound effects with user-friendly copyright.

**Jing Project** ([www.jingproject.com](http://www.jingproject.com)): A free application that enables you to capture whatever's happening on your computer desktop as a video with voiceover.

**Google Docs** (<http://docs.google.com>): A free collaborative, but private, writing space; it lends itself to setting up fan fiction writing and reviewing in schools where privacy concerns rule out the use of Fanfiction.net.

**KeepVid** ([www.keepvid.com](http://www.keepvid.com)): Enables you to download a copy of videos from such sites as YouTube.com.

**NewLits.org** ([www.newlits.org](http://www.newlits.org)): A professional development wiki focused on new literacies and digital technologies for middle school educators.

**Ning** ([www.ning.com](http://www.ning.com)): A free social networking service that users can tailor to specific group needs.

**OurMedia** (<http://ourmedia.org>): A free hosting site for images, texts, and video and audio clips. It is dedicated "to spreading grassroots creativity."

**PB wiki** (<http://pbwiki.com/academic.wiki>): A free wiki platform.

**Podomatic** (<http://podomatic.com>): A free hosting site for podcasts.

**Shambles** ([www.shambles.net/web2](http://www.shambles.net/web2)): A one-stop portal for accessing a range of Web 2.0 applications and services.

**VoiceThread** ([www.voicethread.com](http://www.voicethread.com)): A user-generated content hosting site that enables users to leave audio and video comments on posts.

**Zamzar** ([www.zamzar.com](http://www.zamzar.com)): A free online file conversion program.

dispersed access to human and informational resources.

Within this orientation, 2.0 literacies challenge how schools traditionally have valued a single author laboriously working alone to create a unique text. Literacy 2.0 recognizes that although there will always be varying levels of innovation, producing something truly new or original is impossible; all our cultural resources build on what's gone before. The success of sites like Fanfiction.net speak directly to the pleasure that many people obtain from working collaboratively to produce written texts that build on or remix existing texts.

Fanfiction.net makes it possible for people to post stories they've written themselves or in collaboration with others and receive reader feedback on their narrative structure, writing style, spelling, and grammar. Authors within this space can then change and adapt their narratives in response to reviews or even open up a dialogue with reviewers to explain plot points, character development, and so on (see Black, 2008).

Remixing popular culture artifacts does run the risk of infringing copyright, especially when the results are made public rather than kept private (Lessig, 2008). To date, media companies have turned a blind eye to fan fiction and other fan remixing practices like machinima; game modding (that is, modification); manga fan art and fansubs (programs in a foreign language that fans have translated and subtitled); and anime music videos. The game industry actually sees value in modifications that fans make and is releasing games with components that support modding and remixing.

Addressing remix in school is ideal for teaching students to be savvy about copyright laws and to use Creative Commons resources wisely in their work (Knobel & Lankshear, 2008). Creative Commons copyright licenses enable creators to specify the conditions under which others can reuse their work—for example, the work cannot be reused, or it can be reused with attribution but not for profit, and so on. Science fiction author Cory Doctorow has made his latest young adult novel, *Little Brother* (TorTeen, 2008), freely available for downloading and remixing under a Creative Commons license (see <http://craphound.com/littlebrother>).

### Experts Outside School

Affinity spaces, such as fan fiction writing sites, embody the ways in which distributed knowledge and expertise can support users' development in a given field. AnimeMusicVideos.org is another case in point. *Anime* are Japanese animated cartoons; an anime music video—or AMV—is a series of short clips from various anime videos synced to a specific song. The largely amateur nature of AMV remixing means that immediate access to needed resources and profi-

cient guidance is often limited. The discussion forums on the site make it possible for users to obtain help with transitions and slide effects, clips they need for finishing a project, suggestions for how to troubleshoot a software glitch, feedback on a work in progress, and so on. Newbie and expert AMV remixers contribute what they can to help one another create good videos.

Affinity spaces like this one illustrate the ethos of 2.0—what it means to read, write, view, listen, and record *as well as* to collaborate, participate, and share distributed knowledge and expertise. Literacy 2.0 is not simply an upgrade from literacy 1.0—it's truly a paradigm shift.

Three years ago, when he was 15, Dynamite Breakdown began making anime music videos (Knobel, 2008). Dynamite has attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and

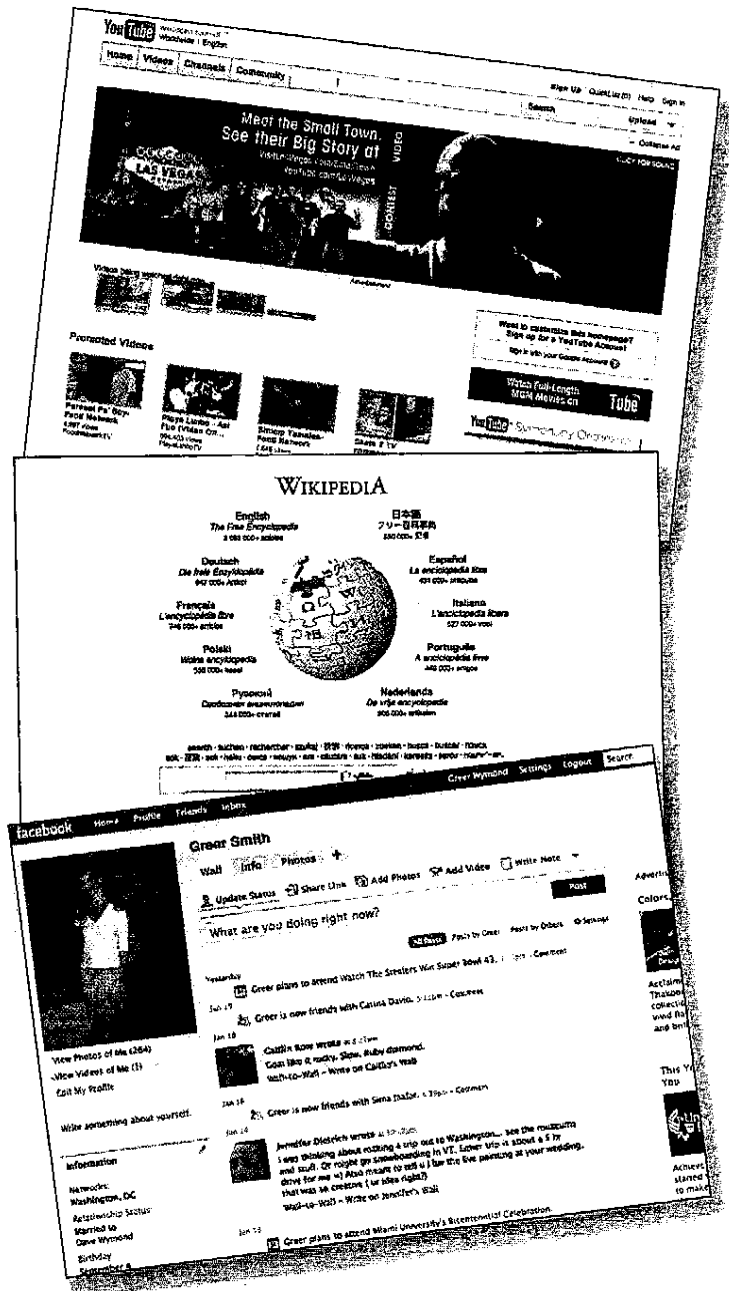
## Literacy 2.0 challenges how schools traditionally have valued a single author working alone to create a unique text.

describes himself as mostly getting Bs and Cs in high school. But he's an expert in creating anime movie videos.

To create his AMVs, Dynamite taught himself how to copy or download anime clips and how to use Windows Movie Maker to stitch his selected clips together, sync them to a chosen song, and add transitions and effects to his developing video. He spends hundreds of hours creating AMVs and working on experimental pieces. (Anime music videos typically include commercial songs and clips ripped from DVDs. So far, this approach to remixing has not been involved in any copyright infringement issues. Nevertheless, AMVs are fertile ground for discussing copyright issues with students.)

Early on, Dynamite made good use of a range of anime fan forums to obtain tips on getting the most out of his video editing software; now he is able to help newbies with technical and narrative advice. He reads review comments that people leave about the AMVs that he posts to his YouTube and AnimeMusicVideos.org accounts, and he uses the comments section to explain why he used a particular effect or transition. He also reviews and comments on others' videos.

Dynamite's anime music video, "Konoha Memory Book,"



won the popular choice award at the 2006 Los Angeles Anime Expo. The video has been viewed more than 500,000 times on YouTube alone.

Countless cases like these occur outside classrooms—and contrast with what these same students do literacy-wise in school. Outside school, many students are accomplished authors, filmmakers, animators, and recording artists. They are concerned with the quality of their work and the meaning it conveys. They spend hours tinkering with their media text or artifact in response to peer feedback obtained online. In short,

many young people's online literacy practices engage them in exactly the kind of learning that educators value, in terms of quality of work, narrative power, character development, logic, and concept development.

Literacy 2.0 is grounded in achieving authentic purposes and completing meaningful tasks. Unfortunately, it doesn't mesh well with such practices as book reports, comprehension questions, leveled reading tasks, and weekly spelling tests that students are asked to do in school.

### Promoting Literacy 2.0 in the Classroom

It is crucial to realize that literacy 2.0 means students take the reins. Students can help one another master new software programs, create engaging alternative assessments, and make the most of collaborative online spaces. Lesson planning shifts from focusing on teacher delivery of content to designing collaborative projects that tap into cross-curricular content, abstract concepts, and learning in meaningful ways. Projects might include podcasting local oral histories or developing a series of documentaries about the health of the local environment. This is far different from having students use PowerPoint to present content obtained from books and through Google, which is nothing more than Literacy 1.0 in digital getup.

Bringing literacy 2.0 into classrooms may also require developing, with students' help, savvy ways of working with or around school filters that block access to many collaborative and participatory online sites. For example, if Flickr is blocked, students can try using Dotphoto.com.

Web 2.0 has developed a range of free participatory, collaborative, and distributed resources that educators can use in their classrooms (see "Literacy 2.0:

Online Resources" on p. 22).

A useful resource for teachers is the wiki (a Web site that any number of people can edit and add to). Students can use a wiki to compile and present a local history study; they can embed archival photos and videos, create hyperlinked pages that focus on different aspects of local history, post oral history interview podcasts they've conducted,

## Literacy 2.0 means students take the reins.

and edit one another's writing in progress (see, for example, [http://newlits.org/index.php?title=Witness\\_to\\_History](http://newlits.org/index.php?title=Witness_to_History)).

Collaborative class blogs are helpful in any subject area. For example, students can use a class blog to discuss graphic novels they are reading, reflect on project progress, or share resources they've found on a topic of interest (see a grade 2 collaborative blog at <http://allaboutbears.blogspot.com>). Students can also write their own blogs, with readers leaving comments on interesting posts. The college students of one of the coauthors (Wilber, 2007) maintain individual blogs as part of their courses; their posts suggest that they think more deeply and become more personally involved in the class and the topics covered because they are blogging.

Fan fiction is another way to leverage literacy 2.0 practices in the classroom. Fan fiction refers to narratives that remix elements of a favorite book, movie, anime, television show, and so on, to create a "new" story. For example, a student might write about the magical

girl, Sakura, from the popular anime series *Card Captor Sakura*, becoming friends with the wizard Harry Potter. The story might focus on how they use their magic together to defeat foes.

One study (Black, 2008) showed how high school students honed their narrative and English language skills by writing for a real audience on Fanfiction.net, posting their narrative publicly, and then refining it in response to feedback.

Literacy 2.0 is not about using Microsoft Word for word processing, using PowerPoint for a presentation, or projecting a computer screen onto the wall of a room. It's about making the most of online resources and staying true to the ethos of Web 2.0. ■

*Authors' note:* Colin Lankshear contributed advice and input to early drafts of this text.

### References

- Black, R. (2008). *Adolescents and online fanfiction*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Knobel, M. (2008, March). *Studying anime music video remix as a new literacy*. Paper presented to the American Educational Research Association annual conference, New York.
- Knobel, M., & Lankshear, C. (2008). Remix: The art and craft of endless hybridization. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 51(2), 22–33.
- Lankshear, C., & Knobel, M. (2006). *New literacies* (2nd ed.). New York: Open University Press.
- Lessig, L. (2008). *Remix: Making art and commerce thrive in the hybrid economy*. New York: Penguin.
- Wilber, D. (2007). MyLiteracies: Understanding the Net generation through LiveJournals and literacy practices. *Innovate Journal of Online Education*, 3(4). Available: [www.innovateonline.info/index.php?view=article&id=384](http://www.innovateonline.info/index.php?view=article&id=384)

**Michele Knobel** (knobelm@mail.montclair.edu) is Professor and **Dana Wilber** (wilberd@mail.montclair.edu) is Assistant Professor in the Department of Early Childhood, Elementary Education, and Literacy Education at Montclair State University, Montclair, New Jersey.