

## Waving at the Future

By **Michelle Chau**

As a tech-savvy modern librarian, I am always looking for better ways to understand, organize, and present information to a broad audience. Collaboration is key to my current job in the marketing department of Toronto Public Library, and I love finding new tools to help complete the task at hand. I am unabashedly a lover of technology. I was thrilled for an opportunity to test out Google Wave when it first came out last fall and can now say that I am a lover of that, as well!

### **A One-Stop Shop**

Described by the company as “an online tool for real-time communication and collaboration,” it allows users to share not only a conversation in a text chat box but also rich formats such as photos, music, videos, and maps. Its biggest strength is that it merges email, IM, wikis, and social networking features into a real-time messaging client. Confused yet?

Much like Twitter has tweets and Facebook has walls, a wave can contain tons of multimedia components which will be stored and can be shared with colleagues who can be added or moved at any time. This eliminates the need for threads upon threads of messages in email inboxes and searching for the correct documents (and revisions!) in the future. Thank you, Google! By Michelle Chau

### **Join The Party**

The possibilities for collaboration are endless as it can function both as email or an instant messaging client

when many people are online at the same time. The ability to modify waves, no matter where you are, allows the tool to function as a wiki as well. What do I use Google Wave for? Off the top of my head: planning events, group projects, sharing photos, meeting minutes and notes, plus casual brainstorming. But don't get me wrong; it's not all business. With the ability to embed task lists that members can strike through when complete, never again will two people bring the same meal to a potluck.

### **Should Libraries Be Waving?**

As Google Wave improves over time and adds more features, I can absolutely see it being used in a large-scale way. The “wave” can be hosted on a library's server, allowing people to work together within the platform.

I've already made it a part of my daily work, continually adding people to waves in order to collaborate and draft new documents. Being able to follow each contributor's edits by having them displayed in a different colour and being able to watch it in real time make it easier to attribute credit where it's due, in addition to backtracking, if necessary. In an industry so heavily monitored by ever-changing policies and procedures, Google Wave makes the creation of these a whole lot easier.

Google calls it “equal parts conversation and document.” I call it one of the best tech inventions in a long time. So between sending out tweets and writing on walls, why not try out this new Google service?

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s the Chief Information Officer of the University of Guelph and Chief Librarian of its library. 2001 President of the Ontario Library Association, Michael was awarded the Association's Distinguished Service Award for his continued leadership and insight into libraries, technological advancement and communication in 2008.  
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