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**ENGARD, Nicole C. (ed.) *Library mashups*. London: Facet Publishing, 2009. 334 pages. ISBN 978-1-85604-703-6. £29.95.**

What is a ‘Mashup?’ Simply put, as the word suggests, you take two (or more) things, and mash them together to make a shiny new thing. In web 2.0 terminology, ‘a mashup is a web application that uses content from more than one source to create a single new service displayed in a single graphical interface’ (p.3). Web services we use every day may have been enhanced using mashed up technology that we don’t notice: the blog that has feeds from other sites you use, say, Twitter and Tumblr; plus bookmarks from your Delicious account, and a slideshow of photographs from Flickr.

The introduction states that the goal of this guide is to outline the basics of what mashups are, and how they have been used in libraries worldwide (though a large proportion of the examples are US based, I guess the UK needs to get mashing!) and in this the book is mostly successful: Having read it I now feel that I know what a mashup is, and how they could be used in a library context to enhance the web services we provide, but whether I’d immediately volunteer to try and build one, I’m not sure, perhaps I’ll go and have a play with Yahoo! Pipes, which is a mashing up tool described by Engard in chapter 7, which she promises will ‘get us hooked’.

The first section of the book, by necessity, has a lot of terminology to get used to, and there are acronyms galore all the way through (nobody wants to keep writing, or reading, Application Programming Interface when API will do). The tone and language of the book, whilst friendly, assumes that you are familiar with web terminology and if you have a low tolerance for jargon and acronyms, you might feel a little discouraged. Don’t give up; there is a lot of creative stuff to discover as you read on. Indeed, as the editor says, don’t worry too much about having to remember all the terms: there is a handy glossary which is not only at the back of the book, but can also be found on the companion website:

[www.mashups.web2learning.net](http://www.mashups.web2learning.net), which is being kept up-to-date with all the links to blog posts, resources and sites that are mentioned in the book, listed alphabetically for each chapter. So should web addresses in the book change or disappear entirely, you can check on the website for the updated version.

*Library Mashups* is divided into sections: What are mashups? Mashing up library websites; Mashing up catalog data; Maps, pictures and videos... Oh my! and Adding value to your services. The examples, some of which are very detailed, are appropriate to these headings. If you only want to know about adding a video mashup to your site, you could maybe just skip to that section, though I’m not sure this book is the one to go to for a simple ‘how to’ guide. It is not just a matter of ‘here’s how to do this cool thing’ but: ‘this is why we need to do it’ and I think the book is all the better for that. There is a need for creating new ways of accessing and sharing our data, moving it into the open and doing things with it, and moving away from the old-fashioned perception of electronic resources that are complicated to access, boring to look at and protected with a multitude of passwords.

Thomas Brevik of the Royal Norwegian Naval Academy says in chapter 4 *Mashing Up With Librarian Knowledge* that ‘The opportunity to externalize our professional knowledge also provides the chance to be relevant to new generations of information seekers’ (p.51), which is one of the key points I take from this book. In other words, what is the point of being a librarian with access to fantastic resources, ready and willing to help, if someone seeking knowledge starts and ends their search at Google because they can’t see how to get to anything more?

This book is about how libraries, repositories and similar institutions are responding to the need for new tools to help users access and use their resources. The attitude is that if such tools do not yet exist, then we should build our own – handy in a time when budgets are being cut. ‘Dream big, and set your content free’, says Jenny Levine, who blogs as the Shifted Librarian, in her foreword (p.xiv). Perhaps we should all just have a go and see what we can create.

**Bekky Randall**  
**Library Assistant**  
**Goldsmiths’ Library**  
[r.randall@gold.ac.uk](mailto:r.randall@gold.ac.uk)

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