Information Search Habits of First Year College Students

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ABSTRACT

New technologies have transformed teaching processes and enabled new ways of study and learning. In these activities, it is suspected that the students don’t make good use of new available technologies or, in the best case, they are underused. The analysis of this issue with the design of strategies to correct any defects found is the motivation that supports the development of this work and the main purpose of it. Evaluate information search habits used by the student and analyse their deduct synthesis and processing capabilities of the results found. The researchers of this study are university teachers of first year subjects, which allows them to know the information search performances by students.

Keywords: New Technologies and Internet, Student Search Habits, Teaching and Learning Processes

1. INTRODUCTION

The fast development of the computing technologies and of the information and communication networks have made possible that the teaching processes have experienced many changes that have allowed new ways of study and learning of all subjects.

Since some years ago, on the first year subjects form the Degree on Computer Science from the University of Alicante, it has been implemented a continuous evaluation system on which is common the development of many test or practical assignments that are submitted during the semester (four-month period). The grade is added to a final theoretical and practical test performed before the ending of the semester. Usually, some of these tests consist on the performance of a desk research on a particular aspect from the subject with the objective of extend or complete its content. On it’s performing; students have to proceed with the information research about the topic entrusted. Without having to perform other analysis, a first lecture shows a large lack of rigor of the delivering and an overwhelming source coincidence.

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Before the emergence of the Internet, the information research was limited to the review of books or papers specialized in the field. Nowadays Internet is present in our lives, that network of networks contain unlimited information about almost any topic. However, not all is correct and precise. Is necessary to know how to search, compare and select the suitable information on each situation. This task is not as easy as the student think, and in fact, constitutes one of the fundamental objectives of the subject and of the production process performed by the student.

The researcher team of this issues are teachers of first year university courses. They have extensive teaching and research experience in the fields of innovative educational methods (Mora, 2009; García et al., 2012). To analyse the habits of the students on information research we count with the accumulated experience of the teachers mentioned at the revision of documentation works and practices of this kind, and in addition, with qualitative information obtained by means of an anonymous survey to all the students where they were asked about the technological and bibliographic resources used on the information research as in the production process of the researching assignments. The analysis of the previous results will allow identifying the deficiencies and problems of the students on this process as well as direct the efforts to learn about how to use the new technologies to the knowledge location on an efficient way.

The remainder of the paper is organized as the following: section 2 presents the background and related works. Section 3 defined the methodology used to find out the search habits students have. Section 4 illustrates the main results and, finally, section 5 concludes the paper.

2. RELATED WORK

There are many previous studies that analyse the researching processes on the Internet by the users, both at university as non-university. These projects try to extract the keys that remark the differences between the time spent on the research, used filters and number of queries performed (Spink & Jansen, 2004; Efthimiadis, 2009; Hess, 1999; Hwang et al., 2007). Some of the conclusions of these studies are discussed below. The big amount of information abatable on the Internet requires of a certain quantity of ability to obtain the expected results. One of the key aspects to success on this task is having the mental and conceptual schemas necessary to orient the research with the proper keywords (Brandt, 1997; Uden et al., 2001). These characteristics increase basically based on the experience, and with it, the results are simplified and increases the efficiency in the process (Perrochon, 1997; Munro & Kwon, 1997; Newsweek, 2010; Song & Salvendy, 2003).

About the evaluation of the found information, the interest aspects must focus on ensuring which found material is error-free, author trust, objective and current (Stenger & Goode, 1998; Tsai, 2003). In relation to the university students, a special searching type is the one that is related with their studies. Respect from that, there are many studies that pretend to evaluate the degree of satisfaction and facility of the webpage of the departments from the universities to offer their relevant information: teachers, schedules, credits of the subjects, etc. (Jacobson and Cohen, 1997; Pointdexter & Heck, 1999; Johnson, 2003; Palmer & Kent, 2007).

Another basic and innovative aspect is the use of the social networks to the information exchange. This is a way of information that is in continuous growth and development and has many acception by the students. There are many investigation projects about the way of treating and disseminate this information (Zhuhadar, 2013; Lytras et al., 2014; Mora et al., 2014). Recent studies about the diffusion of the information in blogs with respect to other social networks conclude that blogs are being a huge source to transmit the information, having these a considerable amount of inputs compared to other type of webs with specialized information (Tang et al., 2009).
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