Chapter 19
Trends in Information Literacy Programmes to Empower People and Communities: Social Technologies Supporting New Citizen Needs

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ABSTRACT
It is explained how an understanding of information literacy programs should evolve to empower people and communities. These programmes, it is suggested, would serve as training in those types of social technologies that enhance the capability of self-organization, social and democratic influence, alternative systems of consumption and services, and so on. Keeping in mind the social and technological attempts to face situations of scarcity caused by the present European economic crisis, the framework of this approach is in the main documents of the European Union concerning citizenship skills, as well as in social demands on open government (transparency, participation and collaboration). Based on the absence or inadequacy of the issues in the syllabi of most information literacy programmes, guidelines are suggested in order that they may be promoted by library systems and other public networks of socio-educational action, emphasizing learning for social innovation.

INTRODUCTION
These days the importance of knowing how to accede to and how to apply knowledge throughout life is acknowledged. Furthermore, it is believed that public policies, not only educational ones, must create the context so that such knowledge can be a public asset within the reach of all. But it is not a question of whatever knowledge; rather, as Pérez Oliva (2014) says, “Of a contextual knowledge based on a changing reality, which allows us to grasp that contextuality and interact with it;
a knowledge essential to remain connected and exercise a citizenship that is critical, responsible and committed”.

The objective of these reflections is to justify that such informational literacy activities (herein-after referred to as INFOLIT) can be diversified to include new themes; re-evaluating their conceptual focus and their teaching practices.

Basically, it is considered that until now instrumental of information search and its evaluation have been prioritized. But it is believed that a more empowering focus of INFOLIT would be to also focus on the users’ capability for a more autonomous-, more personal- and community-based life with a related decision-making and intervention capability.

In these reflections this focus will be the basis; linking itself to two dimensions of daily life. The first is those daily interactions which are already better resolved with technological support – buying, exchanging, expressing oneself in communication, - and, secondly, the desire for participation in aspects of community life - such as citizenship - is collectively demanding; open government, transparency, and collaboration or participation in decision-making processes.

Attention to Information Technology (hereinafter designated as IT) and media literacy has been present for a number of years in a multitude of public policies and strategies which are channeled through concrete programs and actions originating from institutional agencies; in the fields of education, citizen participation, technology promotion, equal opportunities, employability and worker training, and, of course, also from public and university libraries.

By observation of the interventions being fulfilled by INFOLIT, the predominance of those directed towards an instrumental capability can be appreciated; giving prominence to the learning of tools; especially in information search and evaluation, or in the online publication of content. This bias is inherent in the whole educational sphere; where the debate, as always, is between applied and theoretical knowledge, between the teaching of content or of competencies.

But INFOLIT is a key component of digital inclusion frameworks. Beyond access to internet or training courses these frameworks are remarking “Civic engagement” and “Social connection” as roles in which libraries can mobilize their resources to move communities forward in digital, social and economic context (IMLS, 2012).

INFOLIT ought to be evolutionary, open and contextual, since it responds to an ever-changing socio-cultural need and not to a closed academic syllabus. It is important to give a lot of attention to what is taught, and for what purpose. Furthermore, of course, attention is to be given to its being innovative in both the manner of its organization and in the learning-teaching relationship, of informational competencies. It is within this latter concept that the risk of limiting IT literacy to the aforementioned instrumental ends is recognized. Whitworth (2011) synthesizes this situation by contrasting the terms “instrumental progressivism” and “empowerment”; an opposite contrast which has important implications; not only in the conceptualization of INFOLIT, but also in its practical implementation; such as these reflections want to put forward.

There are some well-known examples of advances of INFOLIT programmes in Spain. Within the Spanish University framework, the Conference of Rectors (CRUE) has supported IT certification programmes together with those of personal competencies within the spheres of group work, of problems-solving, of responsibility or the taking of new enterprising initiatives (named CERTIUNI). In the content proposals for tasks in “IT and Information Competences” (CI2), adopted by the University libraries as cross-disciplinary competencies, there is a primary concern for technological or methodological tools, including indicators to evaluate each sub-competency; thereby constituting a very formalized model to facilitate
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