Chapter XIII

Web Portfolios in the Information Society and Future

Introduction

This chapter offers theories behind why the networked e-portfolio (Web portfolio) will evolve into the post modern identity vehicle for the knowledge worker of the new millennium. Ideas behind how Web portfolios are narratives and can change society are established based on writings from information science theorists and scientists including Jean Francois Lyotard, Dr. Amy Spaulding, Professor Nicolas Negroponte, Alan Kay, and Frank Webster. Additionally, the effects of the e-portfolio as a media and information management tool in postmodern society are approached with reference to the writings of Marshall McLuhan, Margot Lovejoy, and Dr. Stephen Covey.

I wrote this chapter to focus on my specialization and fascination with information studies. However, the thoughts and predictions I offer will be
driven by disciplines such as education, humanities, and natural sciences. These disciplines involvement in Web portfolio initiatives within curriculum are a factor in the Web portfolio evolving in professional and academic settings.

The Web Portfolio’s Place in the Information Society

Frank Webster describes the scholarly debate that surrounds the notion of an information society. He explains that information society theorists contend that “technological innovation produces social change” (Webster, 2002, p. 264). On the other side of the debate, of which Webster is a staunch proponent, scholars charge that no information society exists and that information and technology are simply following a path of continuity with historical change. Webster states this point as: “scholars who, while happy to concede that information has taken on a special significance in the modern era insists that the central feature of the present in its continuities with the past” (2002, p. 6).

More importantly, Webster (2002, p. 6) makes the distinction that many scholars occupy various points along the continuum of both constructs. Webster explains that there exist five definitions of an information society. The definitions are driven by the thought that quantitative changes in information are evoking qualitative changes in society, thus contributing the notion of an information society: technological, economic, occupational, spatial, and cultural (Webster, 2002, p.9). I believe that Web portfolios fit into these information society definitions as an instrument that will specifically change occupational information activity. I feel the increasing trend towards Web portfolios have societal implications that will impact the technology applications, economic distribution, occupational scenarios, spatial arrangements, and cultural manifestations that represent acknowledgments that things are changing historically, but at the same time, society is building exclusive relationships that are going beyond technological advances and post industrialist contributions. The information society is a place that people want to be. They want be “in” on technologies adaptation of their lives. It may not be simply an upper income person getting the latest cell phone, PDA, or laptop computer to use in their $50,000 Jaguar; maybe it’s a lower income person getting the latest DVD player and navigation system for their $2,000 Chevy Geo. Or, a young person who makes poverty level wages buying a $400 iPod. These examples are not to be misunderstood; having the right technology will be an important part of
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