Chapter 3

New Approaches to Information Quality in the Digital Environment: Clues, Evidence, and Proof

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ABSTRACT

Information quality considers the value of information and also the negative variants of information, the disinformation (intentional) and the misinformation (non-intentional). The evidential model is composed of six elements (type of information, organic context, organic memory, interactivity, situation, information needs), which result in varying levels of evidence and more information quality in the digital environment.

INTRODUCTION

In a world based on interconnected information, the network society and the technological revolution (Castells, 2000) have not been able to solve some problems involving the quality of information yet. The information produced in digital environments has increased, but it lacks quality information, either for immediate use, neither to reconstruct past events.

In an “infosphere” (Floridi, 2010), where in addition to the analogue spaces of information, cyberspace stands out for its dynamism, ubiquity and capacity for innovation. In this place, where everything is changing, the relationship with information also changes and it requires new approaches to better understanding. In the age of Web 2.0, the collaborative and interactive way to produce and share information. According Rockembach (2010):

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... it hasn’t absolute control about the information that travels on network, but the network is self-managed by the elements, or users, which compound the system. It is possible see this behavior through the social networks of the Internet and in the form how are projected the platforms at the Web 2.0, focused to the users and where they themselves disseminate and resignify the utilities that where preconceived for these systems. (Rockembach, 2010, p. 11)

Considering the concepts of information from Silva (2006) and the Post-Custodial Paradigm of Information (Silva & Ribeiro, 2002), this research is based on the concept of info-communicational phenomenon (Silva, 2006), where it studies the genesis, uses and flows of information with emphasis on the genesis of information.

Traditional ways to see information in Information Science, Archival Science, Records Management, History and Law, in relationship to its analogic media (enduring, stable and immutable), change when the potential of digital media (ephemeral, unstable and mutable) is considered.

The digital systems and Internet enhance usage and dissemination of truthful information, but also hoaxes, intentionally (disinformation) or unintentionally (misinformation) from users (Floridi, 2010).

To explain clue, the Morelli Method, Indiciary Method or Indiciary Paradigm, described by Carlo Ginzburg (1989, 1991) was considered. It is an epistemology applied to the humanities, where the reconstruction of events is made by signs, clues and indications. To approach the evidence, was considered the proposal of Silva (2006) to make a model for evidence of information and considerations of Gil (1996, 1998), Buckland (1991) and Kelly (2008). Finally, to explain about proof, the work of Gil (1986), Murguia (2010), and Candiotto (2010) were used.

The objectives of the chapter are two: show how the past is reconstructed through a system of clues, evidences and proofs and what is behind each of these elements. Furthermore, discuss these concepts in relation to the information quality under a critical perspective and give some examples in digital environment.

BACKGROUND

The production of information through official documents, legitimated by the institutions or through knowledge generated by acknowledged specialists, was, during almost the whole history, the only source of information considered valid, safe and true. The documental collections, custody by archives, documentation centers and related memory institutions, were and still are the faithful custodians of the history of society, at least in relationship to that which was decided to preserve.

However, many factors contributed for the rupture of these traditional paradigms in the constitution of a Society of Information, based mainly, in two central axes: the complexity and the technology. The world and the social relations became increasingly complex, forming an interactive system, of multiple voices and sources, and reflecting on the way of production, usages and flows of information.

The proof value of the records is linked directly to its role of legitimating of information socially and before the organs of the public power, related also to the legal function and of Law. This conferred to the professional of information—especially to the Archivist—a status of guardian/custodian of the records, keeping the authenticity and the reliability of these collections, according to the precepts of the Diplomatic, subject that starts on the Middle Age through suspicions of documents forgery, and that analyses and verifies the structure and authenticity of the documents. The Archival Science, along with the Diplomatic, became source of legitimation to the History and, mainly, to the Law, through the Power Bodies and exercise of authority, where is established “the regime of legal proofs or statutory proofs. On the scope of
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