

Information Literacy: a Key for Getting in Knowledge Society.*Azzedine Bouderbane**Nadjia Gamouh**Professeurs**Khadidja Boukhalfa**Doctorante**Institut de Bibliothéconomie**University of Constantine 2***Introduction**

Progress generates an unprecedented upheaval in all fields. The acquisition of information and knowledge by citizens gives new dimensions to learning and development. Technology has disseminated a variety of products that enable people to have access to information and knowledge rapidly and efficiently in a moving society. Information resources are available in a variety of shapes. Citizens who know how to use and exploit these resources will succeed in acquiring information literacy. Those who possess this culture will feel richer and more powerful. They may integrate this new complex society without difficulties. They cannot be excluded from this modern moving environment. These elements push us to ask several questions:

- Do all people master the techniques of information search?
- Do they know how to use the new products of technology that permit the access to information and knowledge?
- Do they possess information literacy which has become pre-requisite in this new moving digital society?

These interrogations emphasize the problem faced, on the one hand, by a lot of people who live in developing countries and, on the other hand, by some people who live in developed countries. Throughout our study, we will give a definition of the concept of information literacy and will attempt to highlight the characteristics of the new knowledge society and the difficulties to integrate it. We will explain why do people feel anxious about their future social and professional status. We will underline how can people succeed in acquiring information literacy. We will clarify the government's strategy that should be established to help the citizens to acquire this useful culture. A survey is led at the University of Constantine with students specializing in social and human sciences. We have adopted the descriptive approach that has helped us to portray the situation and analyze the collected data.

1. Knowledge society

At present, It is not sufficient to know how to read. We should also be able to know how to use the new means of communication in order to be able to have access easily to the needed information. In this new society, our future relies on our capacities in using and exploiting our knowledge which has become pre-requisite for any progress and for any success. A writer said: "The future belongs to those who master knowledge" (Blanquet, 1999). Libraries and information sources have become a fundamental means for all citizens. They are the main keys that help to open the doors of information society. It is hard to acquire knowledge in this new society, where information knows a real explosion, without handling the techniques of information search. The rapid development of technology has led to the emergence of a variety of new information products and services that permit an efficient access to information. These technological products are found in all areas. They help in filtering a great quantity of information and in processing it at a very high speed. When well handled, these instruments become very useful: "technology changes and the better trained a staff is, the better they can handle those changes" (Childers, 2003).

2. The citizen's anxiety in knowledge society

Training has become an obligation in knowledge society. Formal education is no longer sufficient. People feel the need to continue their education along their life: "training should be viewed as a necessity, not a luxury" (Childers, 2003). It is admitted, nowadays, that the professional activity that we accomplished for years can no longer assure us a work for our whole life. We have to update constantly our knowledge, to acquire new skills to be able to show great performance and to be accepted in the professional milieu. This new environment is extremely dynamic. It offers diverse learning possibilities via multiple knowledge sources and various flexible learning methods; distant learning, electronic learning and virtual schools are some of the concrete examples that shape this new pedagogical space. Self-development becomes essential. Autonomy is emphasized. Every citizen becomes the actor of his/her own learning. Individuals should acquire as many skills as they can to be able to keep their social status and to avoid exclusion. Individuals should understand that in order to evolve, they have to accept change which means to accept to behave differently when there is a need for that. If our professional leadership is threatened, we should not be alarmed. We know that change is everywhere and at all levels. We also know that we should be operational all the time whatever is the speed of change and progress. We should just know how to manage change. Competitors are not enemies. They can be considered as partners or collaborators because they push us to improve ourselves. (Watson, 2003).

3. Information literacy

The American Library Association (A.L.A.) considers the person who has acquired the information literacy as the one who knows when there is a need for information, and who is able to find the adequate information, to evaluate it and to use it efficiently. These persons have learned how to learn. They know how to learn because they know how knowledge is organized,

how to find out information, how to use it so that they can transmit this knowledge to others. They are prepared to learn all along their life (Hindchcliffe, 2005). Information literacy is also seen as a basic human right in a digital world because it promotes social inclusion in society. Information literacy helps us to handle efficiently the techniques of information search and technological devices. These competencies allow us to overcome anxiety that is felt in front of new machines, and to avoid ‘techno-stress’ (Van Wallace, 2013). Thus, performance can help us to integrate the digital spaces with self-confidence and without any embarrassment. Moreover, we will feel able “to participate in designing an info-culture” (Morizio, 1997). We should also mention that it is important for individuals to have a spirit of ethics when using and exploiting information. Moreover, they should understand that information has economic, social and legal dimensions. These aspects can help these individuals to develop their communication skill, to give a consideration to copyright, to acknowledgment and other related aspects. They should understand that it is important to make efforts to produce information, not just to consume it. Information literacy should be acquired by all people. It can help them to integrate this new complex society. Their social and professional position and statute will be preserved. They should know that their future relies on their capacities in using and exploiting knowledge which is the source of any progress and any success. Updating our knowledge has become a constant process and getting the ability to know how to search information is learned in all disciplines; this has become a necessary universal competence (Duspaire, 2004). The government should establish a policy that can encourage people to accept to make efforts to learn all along their life. Sensitizing learners about information literacy generates in them a great motivation for learning. This ability helps them to accept change and to manage it efficiently. They will even endeavour to acquire multiple skills that permit to promote their “faculty of adaptation to more competitive strategies” (Duouis). Informational and educational institutions should be promoted, so that they can play a key role in this perspective. Citizens should have the opportunity to acquire this culture at a very early age. Schools libraries, university libraries, public libraries ... should be put at the center of the citizens’ preoccupation, needs, expectations and aspirations.

4. Students’ acquisition of information literacy: the results of a survey

We led a survey at the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences, University of Constantine, upon third year students registered at the Department of Communication preparing a B.A. degree. A sample of thirty (30) students accepted to respond to our questions in an interview. We wanted to evaluate the acquisition of information literacy by these students who are assumed to be specialists in communication in the near future. We adopted the Association of College and Research Libraries (A.C.R.L.) criteria. Five main questions, corresponding to the five A.C.R.L. criteria, were asked.

4.1. Are you able to determine the nature and the dimension of your information need?

We noticed that all the respondents answered positively the question showing that they were able to express their need for information. They added that they knew how information is produced, organized and disseminated. Re-evaluating their information need was another aptitude that they possessed. Most of the students who responded the question emphasized their capacity in evaluating the importance of each information source.

4.2. Can you get access efficiently to the needed information?

Students specializing in communication attested that they knew how to use information and communication technologies to have access to information. They explained also that they could lead surveys to collect information and have access to it. However, they attested that they faced difficulties in handling some of the approaches related to data-analysis. They ended by adding that they did not know how to build an information search strategy.

4.3. Could you summarize the ideas extracted from the collected information?

To answer our question, students showed their capacity in exploiting the computer in studying the interactions between the different ideas, concepts and phenomena. They added that they could revise their method of information search when facing difficulties in acceding information. They assumed that they were enough skilled in synthesizing and evaluating the various information sources. Moreover, they clarified their skill in handling electronic communication.

4.4. Have you the capacity to use information efficiently, individually or in a group, in order to accomplish a project?

The majority of students mentioned that they had the ability to produce information underlining the fact that they could exploit digital texts and images. Most of them explained that they could communicate with others by presenting their projects via the use of information and communication technologies.

4.5. Do you understand the economic, social and legal dimensions that characterize the access to information and its use?

Most of the respondents confirmed that information had an economic dimension because it could be considered as a source of income. They added that information had also a social impact explaining that people's life was based at every stage and in all areas on the use of this precious resource. They showed that communication networks gave to information a new important dimension. We noticed, however, that students did not give a great importance to the legal side in relation to information: they had not read sufficiently about copyright. They accepted plagiarism. They were not well informed about the importance of acknowledging and referencing.

5. General comments

The students who answered our questions are specializing in communication which is a discipline that requires information skills and knowledge. These students seem to be prepared to assume their future responsibilities. Nevertheless, the survey shows that they have to revise certain aspects that are fundamental such as handling a large variety of data-analysis approaches. They cannot succeed in their professional life if they do not give importance to ethics when manipulating information. They should read more about the legal aspect of information, especially with the dissemination of electronic and digital supports. These students recognize that they do not know how to establish a strategy for information search; which means that it is important to train them to handle some of the essential technical aspects related to information search. Competence which “is a set of knowledge and behaviors” (Praderie, Plasse, 1995) should characterize all individuals in order to be operational in society all the time. The mastery of technology, as an example, has become indispensable; “it has given rise to new paradigms of services and new roles for the staff” (Curran, 2006). Educators, teachers and libraries have an outstanding mission to accomplish: they should prepare the young generation for the new digital society.

Conclusion

In the era of digitalization, Information, knowledge and technologies have given a new shape to the organization of society. The comprehension of change, its assimilation and acceptance throughout the world should incite individuals to be more conscious than before, to be alert and perspicacious in order to be able to cope with change and with its impacts. We have to be present in these new spaces to be able to have a place, a position... a status. We should not be frightened by the digital environment. The handling of multiple competences, the mastery of information and communication technologies can be a suitable issue to face change and to manage it adequately. Literacy suggests understanding and the ability to adapt and increase that understanding (Childers, 2003). Learning and acquiring knowledge can cure us from ignorance, failure and distress. The developed world moves forward very rapidly, but reforms in developing countries are often very slow, and human’s behavior is often inflexible. Governments should help their citizens by reducing their difficulties and anxiety when being in front of projects that require information search and technology use. The educational and cultural system has a vital and strategic mission: it should stand as a strong supporting pillar in enhancing development and innovation in all levels of education. Educators and their authorities should reconsider the potential of information literacy that should be adopted as a global approach for educating citizens who can be able to develop their own identity in a very complex society. We should stop speaking just about food; it is high time we gave a priority to information, knowledge and technology.

References

- (1) BLANQUET, M.F. (1999). S'approprier l'information électronique, *Bulletin des Bibliothèques de France*, 44(3), p. 8-16
- (2) CHILDERS, S. (2003). Computer literacy : necessity or buzz work ?, *Information and Libraries*, 22(3), p.102-109
- (3) CURRAN, M. (2006). The 8'R's and training needs. *ARGOS*, 35(2), p.23-33.
- (4) DUOUI, P. (2001). La gestion des connaissances des humanités aux pratiques organisationnelles. *Argus*, 30 (1), p.29-38
- (5) DUSPAIRE, J.L. (2004). La documentation : une fonction essentielle du système éducatif. *Argos*, 36, p.53-56
- (6) HINCHLIFFE, L.J. (2005). Nouveaux développements en maîtrise de l'information, *Bulletin des Bibliothèques de France*, 50(6), p.56-63
- (7) MORIZIO, C. (1997). Les technologies de l'information au CDI : une mutation documentaire et professionnelle. *Les Dossiers de l'Ingénierie Educative*, dec., p.9-10
- (8) PRADERIE, M. et PLASSE, D. (1995). Les enjeux de la formation. Paris : Retz.
- (9) WALLACE, V.F. (2003). Virtual libraries. *RUSQ*,42(3), p.71-78
- (10) WATSON, M. (2003). La formation des bibliothécaires et des documentalistes au Royaume Uni. *Bulletin des Bibliothèques de France*, 48(1), 68