

Digital Libraries - New Landscapes for Lifelong Learning? The “InfoLitGlobal”-Project

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Abstract. “InfoLitGlobal” is an international educational digital library which was created by the Information Literacy Section of the International Federation of Library Association and Institutions (IFLA) on behalf of UNESCO. “InfoLitGlobal” was conceived as a best practice and collaboration tool for information professionals who want to share their IL resources and materials with an international community and who are interested in learning from colleagues all over the world.

Keywords: educational digital libraries, information literacy, lifelong learning.

1 Introduction

In times of “digital societies”, digital libraries must be more than mere repositories. Modern infrastructures and content management systems give us the chance to enhance the model of a stand-alone digital archive where objects are just deposited for subsequent access and download. Educators and learners in the field of lifelong learning are demanding for digital libraries that can effectively deliver quality materials in formats that are readily accessible. Furthermore these information systems should provide user interfaces similar to web portals, giving access to an actively managed collection of community-constructed educational resources and offering web 2.0 technologies which allow practitioners to connect.

This concept of a “learning digital library” helps the users to improve the quality of learning and education by promoting best practice solutions and by fostering an active community of learning and innovation where resources are developed and shared together. Research tells us that there is a positive correlation between learning and user interaction with a digital library – not only by using the content of a digital library but also by learning to effectively handle the information system itself. Thus digital libraries can have positive effects on learning and information search behaviour in many ways.

2 The “InfoLitGlobal” Project

The UNESCO / IFLA project “InfoLitGlobal” is based on a conceptual design of a “learning digital library”. “InfoLitGlobal” is conceived as a best practice and

collaboration tool for information professionals who want to share their information literacy (IL) resources and materials with an international community and who are interested in learning from colleagues all over the world. In recent years information professionals worldwide have become aware of their role in the process of information literacy instruction. Currently, a fundamental change in institutional, faculty and library recognition of IL is taking place. There are different levels and various practices of IL worldwide. Sometimes the aims of IL programmes are restricted to conventional learning outcomes (following e.g. the ALA IL Competency Standards), in other cases librarians follow a wholistic vision of facilitating a conscious information behaviour. Anyway, the concept of information literacy offers the promise that people will be able to become critical thinkers and independent learners. At best, they are empowered to become lifelong learners.

UNESCO's IL policy consists of awareness-raising about the importance of information literacy at all levels of the education process. An essential element of this strategy is the integration of libraries into information literacy programmes. According to tradition they provide resources and services in an environment that fosters free and open inquiry and serve as a catalyst for the interpretation, integration and application of knowledge in all fields of learning. Corresponding to this policy, "InfoLitGlobal" aims mainly at putting successful IL concepts into practice.

The "InfoLitGlobal" digital library includes information on IL communication, such as blogs, conferences and websites, information literacy products, details of relevant organisations, publications and documentation on training the trainer. The library is browsable by category and country, searchable by keyword and has a listing of the most recent additions. Users who register will be able to upload their own resources to the directory. Recognizing the potential of Web 2.0 technologies the coordinators of "InfoLitGlobal" are planning to implement wikis and blogs to foster interactivity and personalization and to improve and enrich the access of the digital library.

The target audiences of my "InfoLitGlobal" digital library demonstration are information professionals and instructional librarians who are interested in developing new conceptual views of educational digital libraries.

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