

Directions in online Library Science education

In the early years of the century we have begun to have a clear understanding that globalization, the knowledge society and information and communication technologies (ICT) entail challenges to institutions of higher education, exerting influence in educational models, workplace competencies and modalities of intercommunication taking place among the diverse segments of society. Moreover, it is evident that ICT are now one of the material foundations of the knowledge society, which itself has undergone changes making it distinct from other social groupings. The knowledge society contemplates socio-economic systems that require information technology expertise. Driven by these technological transformations, academic and social networks posit new research phenomena for library and information sciences, inspiring a paradigm shift with its foundation in education, information and knowledge. Currently, ICT is widely acknowledged as a medium that facilitates social communication and the acquisition of information and knowledge. Moreover, institutions are furnishing information professionals with a wide array of skills enabling them to meet the diverse information and documentation demands of society. This is so because:

- Information is an integral part of all human activity and its use is potentiated through ICT.
- Flexible technology allows organizational structures, educational models and information services to be reconfigured and modified, which are key foundations of the knowledge society.

- Technologies accentuate their convergence in a highly integrated system, which is a requirement of the knowledge society.¹

On this stage, information is the key element allowing society to participate in processes of cohesion, globalization, informatization, education and creation of knowledge. Information and the exploitation of technologies are now thought of as the ideal media for the democratization of education, allowing its bounties to be delivered to ever broader sectors of society. In the early twenty-first century, as a result of scientific research, technological innovation, privatization and commercialization of knowledge, and the growing demands for more online education options, the teaching of disciplines has been transformed. This situation had led educational institutions to develop sustainable educational programs. In this sense, distance learning in virtual classrooms uses information, knowledge and technological media to encourage didactic dialogues between student and teacher.

Online education is seen as a viable alternative modality, largely because of advances in the science of psychopedagogy and ongoing technological innovation it entails. Online educational alternatives, driven in turn by globalization, trends encouraging curricular flexibility, the development of interactive learning approaches and implementation of technologies in educational delivery systems, are currently in a growth stage.

The virtual classroom is characterized by the convergence of methods, technologies, application and services aimed at facilitating and sustaining learning over the internet. To this end, training in online skills and abilities is fundamental. In this circumstance, learning theory, platform management skills and didactic material and learning object development are especially significant. Moreover, online education approaches must stress the following fundamental concepts and/or skills: learning theory, technological platforms, didactic materials, learn-

1 Manuel Castells, "La era de la información: economía, sociedad y cultura," *La Sociedad Red*, México, Siglo XXI Editores, 1999, 94.

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