

## THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY IN THE MODERN EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

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*Abstract: The main purpose of this paper is to examine the potential interactions between information and learning environments, in order to permit these two worlds to co-exist. We approach problem space in terms of networked information, search and retrieval information and interfaces between institutional repositories within university libraries and current learning systems. Other issues covered will be those related to authentication and authorization or digital rights management. We will highlight the importance of the university library in the educational process given that they have been investing more in bringing together other materials such as digitized rare and historical materials, and institutional research and learning resources into the distributed information environments.*

*From our viewpoint library systems and e-learning systems need to interact in many ways from the simply incorporating collections of learning objects into the traditional library. The dynamic interactions means that teachers and learners will find new ways of developing learning activities, which in turn will influence the way they use learning activities and information content. Our analyze of the library service interactions with learning systems environments will take into account the potential transformation of learning activity. Universities must develop a digital repository that includes two important concepts of digital information management and e-learning management.*

*Another aspect considered in our paper is that referring to information literacy related with university libraries which should provide remote access to their collections but also to information networks: training on information resources, retrieval strategies and how to use the information retrieved. We must recognize that library services have to change according to the new developments and they must to achieve a lot of conditions to become an integrative library. Integrating the library into the e learning process implies changes regarding new services and delivery systems.*

*Keywords: university libraries, e learning, information literacy, users, educational process*

### 1. Introduction

Information society required a new perspective on training, facilitating access to various online information resources using new technologies as a tool to facilitate the educational process. But there is a need for much more research into the impact of on-line learning techniques over the present learning experience because e-learning is a great opportunity to develop new partnerships. It requires permanent cooperation with IT department, university library, faculty of education sciences etc.

The present paper tries to demonstrate that the new requirements for training became established to documentation structures, university libraries for example which have a more active role in disseminating information, transforming itself into centers of educational resources, with the ability to identify, evaluate, organize and communicate information and knowledge. In the modern information society all information became in one way or another available and the most important role for university libraries is how to organise it in such a way that its users can find what they need when they need. The next step is to evaluate and select what can possibly be usefull for them and the final problem is how much

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can retrieve from the founded information, use it where it needs and transform it in additional knowledge. But nobody can be sure to have accessed everything that might be of importance and here the central role return to librarians.

## **2. The university library and e-learning process relation**

Nowadays universities tries to find the answer to the question that arises about integrating the university libraries content and services into a virtual e-learning environment, knowing that this type of education has become one of the most important Web information space segments, intensively developed in recent years. This fact because it is a dynamic environment in which university library must be flexible, accessible and continually up-to-date. On the other hand an e-learning system is providing new opportunities for libraries to design and disseminate new services. Technology has been utilised to improve services, but the same technology make the users think that they could get more direct access to information without the librarians' help. The search instruments (search engines, metasearch engines, virtual libraries, directories, portals etc) are supposed to assume the role of the intermediary and do their job much more quicker and more effectively than the librarian. But this is not a solution because the libraries must to improve their services by using technology such as to create portals and access gateways and this can be done only through the librarians contribution. The growing role of librarians is crucial to the success of knowledge-based society and could help accelerate the university environment.

More and more universities begin to center their services on student rather than requiring them to adapt to the existing model, bringing many of the resources to their needs for successful learning, including those offered by the library, into a single web page. A successful strategy must allow faculty to integrate resources and services from many environments into their unique course and libraries must find strategies for making their resources and services available in this new environment. So, the library traditional role will be changed into a digital environment. E-learning process offers university libraries the opportunity for meeting faculty and students information needs (they have begun to ignore the traditional services offered by the library) being directly engage in teaching and research. It was raised also the problem to improve the relationship between e-learning and university library by integrating the existing library services in e-learning systems. In this context the librarians have a crucial role in helping e-learning process by adopting some tactics:

- the existence of a dedicated library software
- transforming some traditional services into electronic ones to meet the demands of the e learning system;
- the existence of a link to the OPAC (On Line Public Catalogue) from inside e-learning portals integrated with other relevant electronic resources
- the existence of institutional digital repositories
- creating web bibliographies, which could help users to find new information regarding their interest and use them by integrating into the e-learning course support, having functional links;
- facilitating remote access to the full text electronic resources (e books, e journals, online databases, digitized collections);
- possibility of electronic publishing;
- the existence of a tutorial referring information literacy (virtual references, how to create footnotes and bibliographies etc.);
- access to videos, interventions and images;

- adding virtual reference or help services to every point of contact with e-learning students because in the virtual world with digital repositories and virtual classrooms, librarians and professors must ensure that the resources of the university are visible and available to all learners.

One of the most important components of e-learning system structure is related to the retrieval of information resources section. Each course offered in this system indicates, in addition to the course itself, a series of informational resources for students, they requiring an access code.

All of these requirements can be accomplished whether there is collaboration between library systems vendors and learning system vendors. They must develop a technical architecture and applications capable of supporting library services, as part of e learning process.

### **3. Information literacy skills and the librarians**

It is known that the success in terms of knowledge and use of library services depends on information literacy skills of its users regarding a number of specific elements of intellectual work. Most of the times library users don't have adequate knowledge on library resources and how to use them effectively and efficiently. So they must have knowledge about not just the technology, but the domain of the application and the skills needed to determine what they need and how they use.

Electronic environmental impact on all sectors of social and economic life influenced the university training too. Thus, it is required to introduce in training, indifferent of specialty disciplines, a course of information literacy to develop theoretical knowledge and practical skills concerning the construction, processing and communication of information.

The librarian must support teachers' roles by building up information skills and discovering how to integrate them into the course. In this role, librarians encourage faculty in the establishment of learning priorities which ensure that students develop the abilities that will allow them to be information independent in this digital world. The university communities need to understand this, and in turn to support the librarians' effort. It is necessary reconsider the role of university librarians in the new information age and it is need to build relationships with all educational factors, encouraging and supporting them to integrate an information literacy course into curricula.

Permanently librarians were concerned to offer students information literacy skills, to change the faculties' attitudes toward the library and to demonstrate the importance of the library's involvement in curriculum development. It is important to realize what practical steps can university librarians take to become more a part of the educational mission:

- Knowing and understanding the university organization;
- Identifying the university councils, the Senate and working groups which are involved directly in university program and make lobby for librarian membership in these committees;
- Taking a leadership role in providing information literacy courses for all specialties in the university.

Educational processes may be traditional, electronic, in an online environment or through distance education. Analyzing the Romanian educational environment we notice that the faculties have a determined role in the degree to which a library contributes to the university programs, specifically the curriculum, because the responsible factors, in most cases, consider that kind of courses not so important. They have to realize that students will obtain necessary library and information skills through a coursework determined by faculty. In

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addition, the librarians must involve in curriculum planning and cooperative teaching with faculty to help students develop information skills.

In many foreign countries university librarians are equal partners with faculty in the instructional process, a model that not function very well in Romanian university environment. There the library instruction is compulsory, being a required part of the general curriculum and the students have to pass a test to assess library skills before they graduate. From this point of view the librarians must become involved in curriculum planning. Therefore, there are some directions on which librarians must involve:

- interventions in addition to university decision-makers which must realize the importance of introducing such courses in university curricula;
- library managers must demonstrate need for such training;
- they had long-term commitments to integrate library instruction into the curriculum;
- expand their collaboration with faculty in building the curriculum;
- help students understand the role of the library in the Information Society;
- prepare a brochure explaining the concept of information literacy, goals and objectives for the information literacy program, and a basic checklist for evaluating information;
- begin to experiment with various faculty members to develop the most effective way to teach basic information skills
- developing criteria to measure information literacy outcomes

There are some criteria that provide librarians with a powerful rationale in their demand to become involved in the teaching/ learning process to participate in the education of students for success in the Information Age:

- librarians must understand the curriculum and have good relationships with faculty leaders because this support is crucial;
- librarians must facilitate the integration of electronic information into the curriculum
- librarians must offer their expertise in teaching information skills to students
- librarians must help faculty become knowledgeable about electronic information formats
- librarians must be very well prepared for teaching, understand different learning styles, and engage students actively in the teaching process;
- librarians must be flexible to accommodate the range of the curriculum and disciplines, as well as a diversity of faculty and students;
- librarians must use effective marketing techniques to demonstrate the importance of information and technology literacy and their crucial role in it;
- librarians must stay somewhat ahead of the technology developments so they can be the first to teach new information formats and networks.

In Romania librarians hoped to be seen like partners in the educational and teaching process, a hope that was not fully realized in most universities. The higher Romanian education has not yet embraced the concept of integrating information literacy instruction into the curriculum. Reasons for this include such factors as the faculty's control of the curriculum, individuality and autonomy of each institution regarding curriculum and educational outcomes, and the status of librarians within higher education.

University librarians and the members of the Romanian Librarians Association have worked to integrate library and information skills into the curriculum, and in several institutions they have been successful (universities from Brasov, Pitesti, Timișoara, Bucharest, Targoviste). At this time there is an interest within the Romanian Librarians

Association to bring information literacy into the universities curriculum, and this may be one way to ensure information skills as an important learning outcome of higher education.

It is urgent to teach information literacy to students especially because most of them usually work while studying, their work environment involving to know how to use the new technologies in information and communication. Through the information literacy program, students will be able to locate, evaluate, and use information more effectively to satisfy their information requirements. Librarians will work with all faculty members to include information literacy modules into appropriate courses, and to monitor students' progress in becoming information literate.

#### **4. Conclusions**

Nowadays knowledge production has increased rapidly and university libraries' collections have become larger and larger and, in the same time more and more complex, which had to be organised, systematised and made available to users which have diverse information needs. In this context the university library occupies a key position as regards the satisfaction of these growing information needs.

Developing an e-learning course gives librarians the opportunity to redefine learning objectives in information literacy and to share with teachers the task of providing information courses to students. e-Learning should offer a unique opportunity for librarians to collaborate with faculty, to offer courses tailored to end-users, and to provide professional tutoring in information literacy. The benefits of e-learning can overcome the challenges if libraries work together to reduce cost.

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