

La Educación de usuarios en el contexto de la alfabetización informacional

The Education of users in the context of the information literacy

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Recibido: noviembre de 2022
Aceptado: 16 de enero de 2023

Resumen

La Alfabetización Informacional es un conjunto de habilidades, que requieren las personas para reconocer cuándo necesitan información, cómo localizarla, evaluarla y utilizarla eficazmente, sin información no hay desarrollo, por eso con el decurso de los años la gestión de la información, ocupa cada vez un espacio mayor a escala mundial. Se realizó un estudio en la Dirección de Información Científico Técnica (ICT) de la Universidad de Guantánamo, para determinar el nivel de conocimientos y las habilidades informacionales de los usuarios que acuden a ella, en relación a los recursos y herramientas de información disponibles en la red de nuestra institución. Se propone como objetivo la elaboración de acciones para potenciar la educación de usuarios en la formación de un profesional informacionalmente alfabetizado. Se obtendrá como resultado un fortalecimiento de la preparación de los estudiantes de primer año de las diferentes facultades con relación a la educación de usuarios y la Alfabetización Informacional.

Palabras clave: Alfabetización informacional, habilidades informacionales, Educación de usuarios; Gestión de información.

Summary

Information Literacy is a set of skills required by people to recognize when they need information, how to locate it, evaluate it and use it effectively, without information there is no development that is why over the years information management has become increasingly important on a global scale. A study was carried out at the Scientific and Technical Information Department (ICT) of the University of Guantánamo, to determine the level of knowledge and informational skills of the users who use it, in relation to the information resources and tools available in the network of our institution. It is proposed as an objective the elaboration of actions to enhance the education of users in the formation of literate information professional. The result will be the strengthening of the preparation of the students of the different faculties in relation to user education and Information Literacy.

Key words: Information literacy, information skills, user education, information management

Introduction

The Cuban Revolution gave top priority to the education of all citizens from an early age. Such purpose had been expressed in *La Historia me Absolverá* (History Will Absolve Me), a plea of the young lawyer Fidel Castro Ruz in the trial that followed him for leading the assault on the Moncada Barracks in Santiago de Cuba and Carlos Manuel de Céspedes Barracks in Bayamo, on July 26, 1953. Just three years after the revolutionary triumph of January 1959, Cuba declared itself the First Territory Free of Illiteracy in Latin America and created the conditions for each person to have access to higher levels of education, without discrimination based on age, race, sex, sexual orientation, religion, social class or place of residence.

There are eloquent data on Cubans' access to ICTs, even though the level of equipment is still low and therefore insufficient. However, the available resources are still being wasted, mainly because despite the fact that the Cuban people are cultured and educated, the necessary progress has not been made in Information Literacy, which is an urgent process in today's society. Experiences support the vertiginous development of this activity in different sectors and geographical regions. It is considered to be an ideal vehicle for citizens to acquire competencies that empower them for lifelong learning. It is, therefore, indispensable in today's society,

necessarily marked by the imperative of learning to learn knowledge and information autonomously.

Library plays an important role and this is ratified by Ponjuán when he states: "We have to use, more than ever, the strengths of our profession, so that we become an integral part of the new society and thus revolutionize the means of searching, processing and disseminating information" (Ponjuán, 1999, p.43).

This approach is very relevant in the scientific and informative sphere, since one of the most important aspects to be taken into account is the education of users, because it leads us to the organization of activities aimed at guiding them in the bibliographic search through effective methods to make the most of their intellectual work time.

Knowing how to search, evaluate, interpret and use information in any of its forms, offers advantages to the professional in training, facing the challenges imposed by the information society and technology. At the dawn of the third millennium of our era, characterized by the irruption of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) on a universal scale, it is necessary to train and educate future professionals as users of scientific information, especially in university libraries.

The current times call for professionals to acquire and develop skills and abilities in the use of information. For years, the topic of Information Literacy has been strongly discussed in the scientific literature and in international forums, especially in the congresses of the International Federation for Information and Documentation (FID) and the International Federation of Libraries (IFLA), as an expression of new learning needs in the information society and the development of contemporary science and technology. Information literacy is oriented towards the acquisition of competencies to act in the information and knowledge society; this is achieved through the development of skills that allow individuals to become competent in the use of Information and Communications Technology. The Information Society Summit, held in Tunis in 2005, recognized the need to give everyone the opportunity to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to understand, actively participate in and fully benefit from the information society and the knowledge economy.

- The heads of state or government participating in the Summit reaffirmed the commitment to build an information society that is people-centered, open to all and development-

oriented, so that all peoples of the world can create, access, use and share information and knowledge to realize their full potential and achieve internationally agreed development goals and objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals.

- The American Library Association defines Information Literacy "as a set of skills people need to recognize when they need information, how to locate it, how to evaluate it, and how to use it effectively" (Bruce, 2003, p. 289). Most studies on the subject point out that an information literate person should be able to:
 - Determine the information they need.
 - Access it effectively and efficiently.
 - Evaluate it according to their resources, critically.
 - Incorporate the selected information into their knowledge base.
 - Use the information efficiently to achieve a specific purpose.

The Guidelines of the Economic and Social Policy of the Party and the Revolution, approved by the Sixth Congress of the CPC in April 2011, orient developmental strategies in the short, medium and long term, whose implementation would be impossible without the appropriate use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT).

The aim is to achieve greater effectiveness and efficiency, allowing for greater generation of wealth and making sustainable the systematic increase in the quality of life of citizens, on a policy preferably oriented to the social and intensive use of resources, to extend its benefits to the largest possible part of the population and institutions. This strategy focuses on citizens and seeks to improve their quality of life in their family, work, and educational, cultural and social performance.

Development

Historical evolution of the education of information users in the Documentation Centers of Universities

There are some isolated facts that will be treated for their importance, for a better understanding before beginning to analyze the stages, such as: types of users who visited the libraries by phases.

The behavior in each phase of the level of the genetic complexity of the expansion by epochs.

The formation of information users has been a habit of libraries since they became reservoirs of knowledge and culture. From the beginning they were preparing to play a leading role in society and to show those who came to them what documents they had, how they could access them and what services they could provide.

According to García Valenzuela's classification, "the scholarly period of libraries runs from the time of the Library of Alexandria to the eighteenth century and the service period begins in the nineteenth century and continues to the present" (2006, p.6).

The first phase was that of accumulation and registration, whose users were scribes, priests, rulers, with political and religious information needs at the time of the fluvial civilizations, 13th century in Pre-Columbian America.

The second phase was that of erudition and systematization from the third to first centuries B.C.E., the learned, cultured or qualified public had access to these libraries, limited to monks and the educated elite and students with research, leisure and academic needs.

The third phase is that of access to the reading public, the educated elite and less educated public visited these libraries, women reappeared and the bourgeoisie was incorporated with needs for knowledge, recreation and cohesion of social and religious groups, a Scientific Revolution took place and the public library reappeared (XIV - XVIII century).

The fourth phase is that of predominance, diversification and expansion of services, where the proletariat is incorporated and children and young people visit these, this stage is characterized by the consolidation of the bourgeoisie in power, by the class struggle and primary education expands (school libraries and reference services appear, (XIX century).

The fifth phase is that of cooperation and free access, the users are all sectors of the population, this stage is characterized by capitalist development in its imperialist phase and social revolutions (20th century).

In the past, the user was a passive being, waiting to be told how to behave or what to do.

Technological applications in libraries occurred mainly during the 20th century, in rapid succession, given the dizzying pace of technological development in general.

The Documentation and Information Centers in Europe began in the second half of the 19th century; it then had a second stage in the early years of the 20th century with the creation of the Central Institute of Education in Berlin.

In Latin America the first stage was from 1883 to 1889 in Santiago de Chile and Montevideo and another stage from 1915 to 1938 in Argentina, Mexico and Rio de Janeiro.

The creation of the first information institutions in Cuba (archives and libraries), as in the rest of the world, did not mark the appearance of the sciences that study the laws, principles and structure of their activities. History shows, at the beginning, the foundation of the institutions and, later, with the development of their processes and legislation, the appearance of literature, the training of professionals and, finally, the emergence and consolidation of information sciences.

The first libraries in the country appeared in the midst of the backwardness and intellectual poverty in which its inhabitants lived, in the erudite stage of library activity in the world, and of the Golden Age of Spanish culture. They were private libraries called bookstores by their owners and lacked social use, and their volumes were dominated by religious themes.

The first record of a library in Cuba was found in the will of Nicolás Estebes Borges, vicar general of the bishopric of Havana, who died in early 1665.

As for higher education, it dates back to the 18th century, when the Royal and Pontifical University of San Jeronimo de La Habana, today known as the University of Havana, was founded in 1728.

The republican history of the Cuban nation is closely linked to university life especially that of the student body that resolutely confronted the regime of corruption and surrender that for more than half a century governed the political, social and economic destiny of the country.

In 1947 the Universidad de Oriente was created and two years later, in 1949, the Universidad Central in the province of Las Villas.

In the country, school libraries emerged as a system after the triumph of the Revolution in 1960, when by law the Department of School Libraries was created in the Ministry of Education, which could be considered as an action program for school libraries in its perspective development process, whose fundamental objectives are focused on participating in the educational process

actively and directly, fulfilling the objectives of communist education and helping students to organize their reading and study subjects in order to achieve an assimilation of knowledge for the development of habits and skills as well as capacities.

In 1975, the Education of Users was declared an official function and at the end of this same year the 1st Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba was held, in whose Theses and Resolutions the theme was addressed, where it was stated: "To promote the training of users in the use of Scientific Information".

- The second stage of the Educational Revolution (1975 - 1999) had the following fundamental regularities:
- Information became a key and vital resource to promote scientific and technological development.
- For the first time, user education for libraries was regulated.
- A "Cuban Standard for Bibliographic Description of Books and Pamphlets" was created.
- Librarians were better prepared in the use of information.
- Different manuals were created for the analytical-synthetic process of information.
- There was no user education program to develop information management skills.

Since the year 2000, the Third Educational Revolution has begun in Cuba, in which profound transformations are taking place in each of the educational systems, starting with the use of the new Information and Communication Technologies, and with it, changes are taking place in school libraries.

Nowadays, in many places, the user participates in the development of information systems and suggests the creation or improvement of information services and helps in the definition of policies and products of these systems.

General regularities of the evolution of user education from 1960 to the present.

The treatment for the use of information was scarced; the activity was carried out spontaneously. There were no significant advances in the first years of the Revolution, although it was evolving, there were still some insufficiencies in terms of the behavior of user education.

- The level of preparation of librarians regarding the development of information management skills was poor, there was not enough preparation, with the implementation of the scientific information program the work has been improved, but there are still insufficiencies in the development of information management skills.

- At the beginning of the 1960's there were no normative documents, then a "Cuban Norm of Bibliographic Description of Books and Brochures" was created, perfecting the librarian's work.

The historical evolution of user education in the early years was spontaneous; it was in 2005-2006 that a Scientific Information program was created to address the development of scientific information management skills in Documentation and Pedagogical Information Centers.

Currently, the term user education is replaced by information literacy. For these reasons, a new look is required to the educational orientation from the integration of educational influences, in which the librarian, as a socio-educational entity, orients not only the research teachers, but also the directors and students, and guarantees the informational culture from a transforming point of view where construction and collaboration are mediated.

Information literacy and lifelong learning are the beacons of the information society that illuminate the pathways to development, prosperity and freedom. Governments and intergovernmental organizations are called upon to support the recognition of information literacy and lifelong learning as a key element in the development of generic competencies that should be requirements for the accreditation of all educational and training programs. Área, referring to information literacy, states "(...) the teaching methodology of this subject should combine the use of varied learning spaces that combine the face-to-face with the virtual (...)" (Área, 2007, p.54).

ALFIN in libraries is a training requirement that should be offered to staff at various levels and through various approaches. In order to achieve excellent results, the program leader must have a good knowledge of models, standards and best practices in order to offer the right skills and attitude sets in terms of communication, technology, documentation and didactics.

Education today faces two challenges. One is to change the perception of the quality of learning. The second is the development of information technology that provides a new context for teaching, learning, information and communication (ICT), the combination of computer hardware, system software and network infrastructure, has been a breakthrough for teaching and learning (Jange, 2009, p.36).

Information literacy is a prerequisite for continuous lifelong learning and is common to all disciplines, all learning environments and all educational levels. It enables the learner to critically engage with content and extend his or her research, to become more self-reliant and to assume greater control over his or her own learning process.

The library is conceived so far as a support service to the university, so it has to be transformed into a key indispensable service that helps and facilitates students and professors to access, manage and handle information in a new era called "Knowledge Society".

To address the low utilization of available information, as well as the lack of knowledge about the new tools that have emerged for information and knowledge management in computer networks, the present research is proposed in two stages:

The first one, on the basis of the applied diagnosis and the evaluation of user education for first year students, which allows us to appreciate from the quantitative and qualitative point of view the state of knowledge of the students' scientific informative activity.

- The second one is based on the elaboration of a proposal of methodological actions to enhance users' education, with the purpose of raising the informational culture.

In order to carry out the diagnosis, the observation of the students' behavior in the information management process was applied. In our case, a guide was used which showed that when requesting information, students are insecure, which evidences the lack of habits in the search for bibliography. Deficiencies are also observed when it is time to state their information needs. Thus we arrive at the following analysis:

In the first question about whether the Scientific Information Center is visited systematically, they answer yes. However, when asked if they are aware of the services provided in this

information unit, they cannot determine which ones they have become familiar with; this shows that despite the high percentage of visits, utilization is low.

In general, there are deficiencies in the use of catalogs, lack of knowledge of the structure of works and of the Cuban and international standards, fundamental issues for the development of research and other student scientific activities. In relation to the knowledge of automated services, its use is very low. This alerts us to the fact that the orientation of students towards the use of automated information is deficient. Consequently, this diagnosis shows us the real state of the situation as far as information culture is concerned, with respect to first year students. In view of these problems, a proposal of actions has been elaborated to enhance the education of users in the formation of an information literate professional.

The proposed actions have methodological implications that allow raising the students' level of preparation to scientifically conduct the teaching-learning process and improve it, based on the diagnosis, and to use methodological workshops as a fundamental way in this sense.

All of the above allows us to assure that the work, due to its projection, activities and ways of execution, is feasible and can help to strengthen the preparation of first year students of the careers offered by the different faculties in relation to user education and Information Literacy. It should be noted that although the diagnosis was focused on the aforementioned sample, daily experience has shown that the lack of use of information and available tools goes beyond the first year students, and extends to a large part of the universe of students, and even to some members of the faculty.

It follows that the actions to be undertaken to solve the current deficiencies and insufficiencies must also contemplate the improvement of the teaching staff, not only so that each teacher is capable of self-managing the necessary information and knowledge, but also to contribute, in the same sense, to the systematic training of future professionals, both directly and indirectly. What to do so that Information Literacy meets the requirements to achieve its objective and those new technologies are properly used in terms of Information Management?

1. To enable the user to identify, from the different media, the most valuable and reliable sources of information for his or her informational development.

2. To make people literate in information and communication technologies, as well as in the intellectual and critical management of the information obtained.
3. To make information professionals and users aware of the new ways of presenting information, as well as new ways of searching for, accessing and processing it.
4. To make information professionals aware of and take advantage of their relationship with the information industry, publishers, booksellers and information agents.
5. To ensure that information management is linked to the development of an organizational and social culture aimed at the rational, effective and efficient use of information in accordance with the objectives and goals of information institutions.
6. That the information professional be able to take on new challenges, new functions in his or her field of work, more related to teaching and support in the field of education for information users.
7. To achieve that the librarian, as a professional, has a permanent education. Actions designed:
 - To inform students, from the first year, about the services provided in the library premises.
 - Orient users about the library's collections and information products and describe the advantages of using the available resources optimally and efficiently.
 - Give talks about the world of automation and develop skills in the use and management of the resources and tools available in the institution.
 - Illustrate how to navigate the Internet efficiently.
 - Provide search services on the network and publicize their strategies.
 - To develop conferences on Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and the development of the scientific-informative activity; to explain what the Internet is, the functions and uses of Electronic Mail as a tool for human communication, its characteristics, advantages and disadvantages, so that they can value it in an integral way; in addition to the Intranet services and its importance within our University.

By means of the results of the survey applied in a general way, it can be concluded that the users who most frequent our center do so with the purpose of preparing seminars, projects, studying

with the help or information of the librarian and for most of those surveyed, the courses and the ALFIN room have provided skills for information management and searches,

By analyzing the issues addressed in our research with respect to user education, we believe we have sufficient elements to reach conclusions, although these are only a new starting point on the long road of this wonderful profession that is learning to learn.

Conclusions

From the applied diagnosis and the assessment of the behavior of first year students regarding the use of information, it is considered that the information services are updated, however, students do not access them in an optimal way, the proposed actions have been elaborated taking into account the personal and non-personal components of the teaching-learning process for the preparation of students. The structuring and flexibility for their implementation depends on the creativity and professionalism of the librarians, in order to promote a better use of scientific information in the initial training of teachers. Therefore, the results obtained offer a way that facilitates the librarian's preparation to promote the use of scientific information in students, developing skills, establishing the librarian-user relationship, and establishing a better use of scientific information.

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