

NEW LIBRARIES IN THE LEARNING SOCIETY

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Abstract

In the learning society, the traditional instructive process has radically changed: it is not still restricted to children and teenagers, but it concerns all lifetime.

Every citizen is supposed to acquire new skills and to use new technologies, not only in his professional framework, but also in his personal and social circle.

In the world of knowledge, libraries (public institutions and multimedia laboratories) become a privileged place for elaborating information and learning. Only in libraries it is possible to select, personalize and analyze information and web data.

Traditional services (loan, reference, preservation) are supported by new technological instruments, that are meant to satisfy individual needs. The social framework, that library naturally creates, is extremely important because it causes many informal educational processes that complete and fortify students curriculum. Many formative trainings can take place in Italian universities libraries, before and after taking a degree. The trainee acquires many technical skills (data banks, audio and video storage mediums, electronic journals) that are always included in a social framework where the librarian gets the role of a tutor in order to simplify learning process.

The teaching program is based on a tutorial workshop strategy, where students elaborate personalised projects, set themselves aims suited to their interests and studies; trainee's motivation is the most powerful cognitive variable.

The key of a library training's success is the problem oriented setting; that kind of trainings, in fact, are concretely integrated in educational academic programs.

The concrete presence in the library is really crucial: that is because learning is a intrinsic form of the job itself.

Library becomes a "learning environment" where students can apply different learning techniques: they practise specific tutorial projects or they collaborate together in small teams. Strategies are always related to the constructivism pedagogical theories.

An opinion poll, based on a representative sample of trainees, has shown how good are trainings results. Students feel this experience as an occasion of inner developing, as a strengthening of their information literacy's level, further than the purely technical knowledge of a librarian (librarianship and bibliography). Trainees become ambassadors of a post modern, multi-perspective and flexible model of library. Post modern human being has gone beyond his natural drive that induced him to divide, classify and arrange the universal knowledge. This change will let him adapt, according to his needs, the multitude of cultural models and the scale of values around him.

This is a process of learning construction that lets everyone being able to understand the meaning of any kind of information, customize it and use it in the most appropriate framework.

Keywords

Library

Education practise

Curriculum design

Training

Transferable skills

Classroom and Laboratory: Integration

POST-MODERN LIBRARIES IN THE WORLD OF KNOWLEDGE

In the learning society, the traditional instructive process has radically changed: it is not still restricted to children and teenagers, but it concerns all lifetime [1].

Every citizen is supposed to acquire new skills and to use new technologies, not only in his professional framework, but also in his personal and social circle [2].

The theme that is under the learning society vision is the permanent education that could be defined as “an intentional progress along a person’s course of life where the opening cultural goal is revised and updated to face up to the challenge created by a continuously changing society” [3].

In the world of knowledge, libraries (public institutions and multimedia laboratories) become a privileged place for elaborating information and learning. Only in libraries it is possible to select, personalize and analyze information and web data [4], estimate, choose and organize obtained results and integrate them in a studies curriculum. It not only lets libraries be something different from an isolated world or simply a help to didactical activities, but it allows them to be the curriculum studiorum’s ground [5].

In new libraries meant as laboratories, there’s a coexistence of implied and codified forms of knowledge, so the library assumes a cultural, informative and formative function: a learning environment where different kinds of collective intelligence are elaborated [6].

In post-modern libraries [7] traditional services (loan, reference, preservation) are supported by new technological instruments that are meant to satisfy individual needs. The social framework that library naturally creates is extremely important because it causes many informal educational processes that complete and fortify student’s curricula [8].

Beyond the library meant as a physical place, new spaces come out [9]:

- Linguistic space, where different languages and various reality and knowledge’s symbolic operations meet each other
- Energetic space, where reference and digital documentation services are more visible then book collections preservation functions.
- Cultural space, where ideas and their governing laws meet each other.
- Social space, assembly place meant for people physically present in the library and other people who interact thanks to the web; both of them share expectations and interpretations. Patrizia Lucchini [10] says that “every occasion of getting used to electronic resources and digital documents” should be as well “an occasion of social inclusion”. This is possible in case of real presence and at a distance, when thanks to on-line technologies, we can create emotionally valid environments, full of various supports and interpersonal relations.

Modern Library	Post-modern Library
Public space	Personal and social space
Free admission, heterogeneous users, unspecific collection	Universal availability of resources, custom-cut access to information

Table1. Libraries spaces

EDUCATIONAL MODEL OF TRAINING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PISA

Nowadays libraries offer many occasions to populate and live those animated environments of which the many formative trainings that can take place in Italian university libraries, before and after taking a degree, are a valid example.

 Area bibliotecaria archivistica e museale dell'Università di Pisa			
Internal trainings (for a standard period of 150-250 hours) Meant for students who are attending the following academic courses			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public administration and business • Agrarian industrial biotechnologies • Chemistry and pharmaceutical technologies • Literature and philosophy (every course of the faculty) • Pharmacy • Management and guardianship of agrarian and forest environment. • Management of urban parkland landscape • Foreign languages and literatures • Agrarian sciences • Geology • Politics and international sciences • Herbal techniques • Viticulture and oenology 			
External trainings (for a maximum length of 600 hours)			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-graduate trainings, grant giving, meant to make professional choices easier 			

Table 2. Faculties where library trainings can take place

Every person involved in this kind of training (didactic coordinator, teaching staff, tutor, library staff, trainees and users) receives a great benefit from this experience. They are all acting in the (not only) physical library space and that suggests an enlargement of that kind of performance to every faculty of the University of Pisa, that should be put in effect in the current academic year.

Trainee acquires many technical skills (data banks, audio and video storage mediums, electronic journals) that are always included in a social framework where the librarian gets the role of a tutor in order to simplify the learning process. We can see a different teaching figure [11] who promotes activities meant to give strength to the library's role as a learning institution, "able to assume a highly responsible and extremely important task: guarantee everyone the entrance to an organised informative space" [12].

Focus on tutor's role
<p>The tutor will organise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preliminary knowledge moments between trainees and introductory lessons about every library's activity. • individual and group exercises in computer classrooms meant to introduce the use of digital resources and encourage electronic skills, • discussion, collaboration and simulation, • decision making moment: choice of the kind of library where to practically performing the training, problem oriented training's project elaboration, individual study phases, • elaboration of a final account.

Table 3. Focus on tutor's role

The teaching program is based on a tutorial workshop strategy, where students elaborate personalized projects, set themselves aims suited to their interests and studies; trainee's motivation is the most powerful cognitive variable [13].

We are in front of the highest education quality, the one meant for inner circles of students, this is realized by individual and group exercises in computer classrooms where everyone has a single pc at his disposal. Here some explorative preliminary moments take place, and students from different faculties meet each other, getting friendly to subsequently concentrate themselves on a topic on which they work together in classrooms. Here they discuss, they simulate bibliographic researches in data banks, web-sites and portals to achieve a compilation phase that can take place in presence and in the distance. The use of e-learning platforms in blended mode is restricted to the developing of certain subjects or particular examinations because we privilege a communication model that needs the teacher's physical presence, the concrete discovery of the library and tours to very important libraries that are characterised by particular collections or forefront services.

The key of a library training's success is the problem-oriented setting; that kind of training, in fact, are concretely integrated in educational academic programs [14].

The concrete presence in the library is really crucial: that is because learning is an intrinsic form of the job itself.

We focalize our attention on the library trainee's role: presently there aren't specific studies about him [15], so we can outline all the processes that involve him as the main character:

Focus on trainee's role:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. He assumes a mediation function between the library's standards and the various needs of users. 2. Users feel a higher physical and language closeness between themselves and the trainee. 3. The sharing of working practice creates a synchrony in the subjective perception of problems. 4. There's a social and emotional factor, created by the complicity between trainees and users that increases the trainee's motivation level and mitigates the "library anxiety" that users feel [16].

Table 4. Focus on trainee's role

Library becomes a “learning environment” [17] where students can apply different learning techniques: they practise specific tutorial projects or they collaborate together in small teams. Strategies are always related to the constructivism pedagogical theories that conceive the teaching methodology as a student’s active process. The student builds up his knowledge by an interaction with the teacher, a reworking of given didactical literature, a meditation on it, and a collaboration with other students, a discussion and a subsequently in-depth analysis [18].

An opinion poll, based on a representative sample of trainees, has shown how good trainings results are.

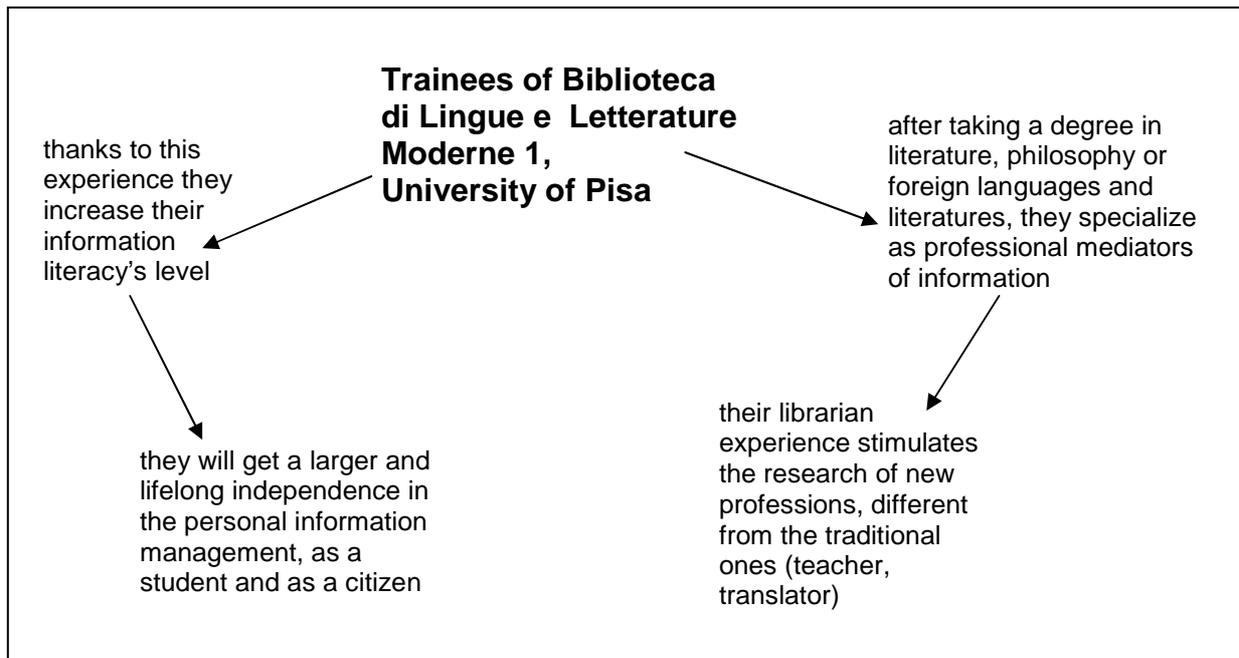


Table 5. Results of an opinion poll effected by exhaustive interviews (2007)

Students feel this experience as an occasion of inner development, as a strengthening of their information literacy's level, going further than the purely technical knowledge of a librarian (librarianship and bibliography) [19].

LIBRARIES AS LEARNING ENVIRONMENT: TRAINEES' POINT OF VIEW

Let's give Library of Modern Languages and Literatures trainees leave to speak...

Silvia Profeti, 175 hours training, academic course in European languages and literatures for editing and cultural production. September-November 2007.

"In the collective imagination, the library is conceived as a frozen place, a world bound to tradition, far away from technology. That's not true! A library is an open place where collections change constantly and there's a big increase in the use of web's new resources. [...] I don't consider this experience as a tiny digression in my academic course. This is a starting point from which I can see everything from a different point of view".



Cristina Vincenzi, 150 hours training, academic course in Foreign Languages and Literatures. October-December 2007.

"...I have understood that libraries are active, living structures, sites of socialization and relationships, crowded with young people, researchers and lovers of culture. Libraries are meeting places where users take advantage of a continuous assistance by librarians who are seen as a kind of "sensors" switched on to catch everyone's experience; that's why they are able to educate people in using library's services".



Denise Cammilli, 175 hours training, academic course in European Languages and Literatures for editing and cultural production. May-November 2007.

"In the last few months I have understood that every library is first of all a social space because I have been partnered with other proactive and initiative trainees; with them I have built an extremely positive relationship. We have become friends, as we share interests and thoughts and we have been great colleagues, we have collaborated, we have exchanged ideas and pieces of advice and we have had a mutual understanding".



Marianna Saliba, 600 hours training, M.A. in History of Art. September 2007-March 2008.

"This experience has radically changed my idea of the library, even though I have frequently attended libraries during my studies. In these months I discovered a new world where past and tradition can peacefully and productively coexist with future and innovations, and where there's a moving and variable social environment that gives a constant motivation and different points of view. Thanks to this experience my information literacy level has surely risen and I feel more confident about my professional ambitions".



Table 6. Extracts of trainees opinion poll

Trainees become ambassadors of a post modern, multi-perspective and flexible model of library [20]. The post modern human being has gone beyond his natural drive that induced him to divide, classify and arrange the universal knowledge [21].

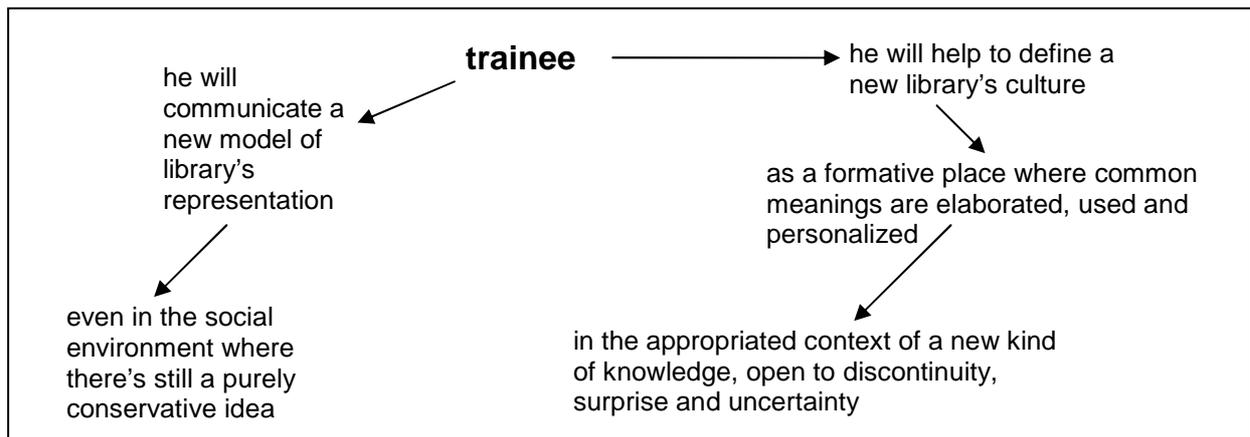


Table 7. Trainee as a vehicle

The table below, given by Peter R. Young at the International Conference on New Missions of Academic Libraries in 21st century, summarizes the passage from a traditional dimension to an extremely new one, with regard to the different library's activities and first of all to the renewed users needs [22].

Modern library	Post-modern library
Fixed and permanent collections of texts	Fluid multi-medial resource
Static librarian structures	Free flexible spaces
Uniform sources, citations and references	Personalized notes and temporary literary work
Services meant for individual readers	Services meant for cooperative groups
Standard reference services	Personalized counselling
Specialization on a particular topic	Multidisciplinary studies
Services for generic users	Services for specific users and activities
Formal publications	Formal and informal integration

Table 8. Roles and services of modern and post-modern libraries

This change will let post-modern human adapt, according to his needs, to the multitude of cultural models and the scale of values around him.

This is a process of learning construction that lets everyone be able to understand the meaning of any kind of information, to customize it and to use it in the most appropriate framework [23].

In a flexible formative environment, where 40% of learning comes from informal fields (mobiles, palmtops, wikis...) [24], libraries have an extremely important role as they become a real learning institute. Here generic instructions for users, typical of traditional libraries are developed into specialized courses for students, trainees, postgraduates students; so at the end of their academic education they take advantage of this experience to increase their knowledge and to enforce the "new education frontier given by information literacy" [25].

Therefore we conclude with the words that Umberto Eco makes Adso says in "The Name of the Rose": "Library is the kingdom of learning" [26].

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