

Communication: the Digital World Keyword

Valentina Comba

Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna - Italy

Santander, 23rd September 2004



Internet and the social life

“Internet and its related technologies....change almost every aspect of our lives-private, social, cultural, economic and political...because [they] deal with the very essence of human society: communication between people.”

(Manasian, The Economist)



Effects and interpersonal interaction

People use Internet to communicate over e-mail
...in the workplace

...in personal relationships and community involvement

The role of trust (and the obstacle of spam)

...”Internet sheds light on those aspects of face-to-face interaction that we have missed all along...”

(Bargh and McKenna)



The pace of change

Do we perceive how and how quickly we are changing our habits ?

Digital divide and elderly people

The “visual generation”:
video cell phones,
instant messages ...

Have you seen the movie
“Lost in translation” ?



Trusting information technology...

Studies on groupware products and Internet applied to organizational change

“...It is important not to underestimate the power of the counterforces which exist to maintain the status quo..”

The story of a failure in improving communication and collaboration with information technology

(Olesen and Myers)



Reflections on IT education, social life and ...failures

Social IT experts and information scientists criticize IT professional education in US based solely on mathematics and related disciplines

“...They [do not] learn empirically anchored analytical approaches to understand the relationships between IT applications and human life in organizations and the larger society...”

(Kling)



Emphasis on communication

- In the organization seen in general, in the process of change and in relation to leadership
- In the learning environment
- In the scientific communication process



Communication: the organization and the change process

There are always
changes in the
environment and
within the organization:
good communication
helps manage change



[... and leadership styles]



Organizations take care of
leadership styles

ethic leaders vs *epic* leaders

A leader should be aware of:

- Communication
- Relations
- Interactions

Learning environment

Many of us work in Academic or Hospital organizations

Teaching is considered a minor task compared to care and research

Is this good when training good health professionals and medical doctors ?

Maybe not.

Learning to listen and to develop good communication skills is very important

In the learning environment we are deeply concerned



Scientific communication

Recent studies on the communication chain and the technology impact

[.....]

Libraries have had always a role in this chain, but the Information Professional position and role is changing

Our “case study” will discuss this role by the point of view of:

- New services for e-publishing and communication
- Marketing new services in a conservative and challenging environment



Case studies

- Open access and institutional repositories: communication and marketing
- E-learning and the information professional: traps and jewels
- Information professional-User interactions: library services and user studies



What do we learn ?

- Technology/interaction
- Roles and stereotypes
- Building a “healthy” collaboration
- “Vision” is crucial



Open access and institutional repositories: communication and marketing

- One of the most important new roles of Information Professionals in the Research and Academic environment is to support new forms of e-publishing: Open Access, disciplinary repositories and institutional repositories
- The technology is already quite well known, the hard task is to get contents in place (Pinfield) (Horwood and coll.)
- At international level there are several places, forums conferences, meetings where the marketing/advocacy questions are being discussed and some interesting suggestions issued
- One of the most interesting proposals is to involve Funding Agencies at national and international level (which is likely to happen in Europe)



Open access and institutional repositories: communication and marketing.2

Most of librarians who are actively working to support these new services agree that marketing is the most complex and time consuming task
In Italy we are trying to form a national task force/advocacy group and raise awareness at the Rectors Committee

...but it is interesting to discuss what is happening in a local/large size University at this stage of our work: We are facing a number of obstacles:

- Very large and different researchers communities
- Cross projects
- Marginal role of the libraries in the Academic context (and certainly not included in the University plans about Publishing and Research evaluation)



Open access and institutional repositories: communication and marketing.3

In the light of the “Pragmatics of human communication”, librarians position at the Bologna University context is “complementary”:

- we relate with Professors and Researchrs in a “down-up” position because of stereotypes about libraries: our proposals are not prioritised in the University Agenda compared with other projects
- One possible outcome is to become a publishing website for unpublished workshops and proceedings– not a real istitutional repository for ALL research papers (which are not archived is disciplinary repositories or in open access peer reviewed journals)



Solutions !

- Convince the Academic Board to set up the Open Access and the institutional repositories as a priority in the University Agenda
 - Build an alliance with the other projects, mainly the Research Area, about impact and evaluation of research papers
 - Share problems and strategies at national and international level
- acquire a symmetrical position, and actively interact with all Academic Bodies



E-learning, communication and Information Professionals

E-learning is an important opportunity for us. Why ?

- Many institutions, organizations and public authorities are investing in this area
- We may use e-learning to train our users and develop knowledge about information search in the biomedical area (which is increasingly complex and large)
- It may help us to familiarise with new technologies, equipment which is closely related to OAI, Open Source, digital repositories management technologies and issues
- This may enhance our visibility in the learning environment



E-learning, communication and Information Professionals.2

...but we should be aware of e-learning pitfalls...

- *e-learning is not distance learning
- *the Learning Object quality is vital (a priority)...and building good learning objects requires time and new knowledge
- *e-learning gives a lot of student feedback and it is important to make good use of it
- * new learning technology may be a quite expensive and time consuming



E-learning, communication and Information Professionals.3

- We can try to be involved in e-learning projects at all levels of Information Literacy training, and even to update our users about new databases and search tools
- We should remember that the key of e-learning success is quality and interactivity in communication



Interactive services

Interactive services are effective:

- Training
- Reference
- Digital, collaborative reference

Have you tried to organize it ?



Narrow the gap with our users using a better communication

- Users studies
- Feedback
- Frequent surveys
- Not just satisfaction...enthusiasm !





enjoy the conference
enjoy our unique wonderful job:
after all our work is for the patient's health

