Information literacy in Web 2.0 environments:
emerging dimensions of research

Sonja Špiranec, PhD.
Department of Information & Communication sciences,
University of Zagreb, Croatia
What this talk is not about

• how to use web 2.0 tools, applications / social media in IL instruction
  – interpretation of the interdependence of IL and the Web 2.0 through a tool perspective (Goodwin, 2009; Click & Petit, 2010; Luo, 2010).

• the Web 2.0 is perceived as a rich source of diverse tools that enable IL teaching enhancement and more engaging and active methods of teaching users.
What this talk is about:

• how IL is transformed thorough Web 2.0 environments
• IL: how it solves problems caused by digital, thorough social media constructed information environments
• shifts as “emerging dimensions of research”
Assumptions:

• Information literacy:
  – begun to spread as the result of a growing heterogeneity and complexity of information, information resources and information structures, environment etc.
  – transformations in information environments are influencing IL
Shifts in information environments – shifts in IL

1. IL as library-focused user education (tools-oriented)
2. Web 1.0; internet-focused (skills-oriented)
3. Web 2.0: ? evaluation- and community/socially-oriented
Web 2.0: THE “influence of our time”:

• readers became writers, consumers producers, participation, collaboration...

• consequent phenomenon:
  – disintermediation?
  – algoritmysation: Wikipedia and Google as gatekeepers of our time

• culture of equivalence (T. Brabazon)
Why WEB 2.0 transforms IL

• IL as the reflection of information environments
• IL is connected with knowing an information landscape
Comments of experts & scholars
Comments from IL experts:

“Web 2.0 environments as the cause of current information pathologies:

*The variety and diversity of novel forms of information and communication resources within Web 2.0, and their sheer number, clearly contribute to the overload and other issues...“*

• the emphasis on existing information literacy concepts lies in searching information and learning with information, which has to be questioned:

“More than efficient retrieval and navigation strategies, information literacy today includes the creativity to organise and shape one's own information and learning process in a conscious and demand-oriented way, therefore IL 2.0 is more about learning about information then learning with information”

Hapke (2007)
“...need for a perhaps new vision of information literacy...content co-creation is conducted in an environment that disregards authority, hierarchy and order, giving voice to the individual and to ever changing groups or communities.”

“Through social networks, social bookmarking, collaborative knowledge development, creative works, and content aggregation Web 2.0 combines facts with other dimensions of human experience”

• Erosion of information contexts:
  “we will receive more and more documents and (commercial) messages that are detached form all contexts... In essence, IL is all about recreating or reconstructing the lost sense, the lost context.”

“With the growth of Web 2.0 technologies, we need to start shifting towards providing instruction that will enable our patrons to be successful information seekers in the Web 2.0 environment, where the process of evaluation is quite a bit more nuanced.”

Farkas, 2011
Understanding novel philosophies and forms of disseminating information

• shift how information is flowing online
• information of high quality may appear outside traditional scholarly domains (blogs, self-published items, wikis, videos presentations)
• non-traditional scholarly information objects that lack the imprimatur of publishers, but still may be of educational / scientific value
• users need a deeper understanding of these forms to make informed decisions on whether to use them

Research focus: use of novel forms of information
Issues of trust

- which information to trust?
- lost security with the disappearance of centrally managed and structured information environments
- sites of information not stewarded by traditional information gatekeepers any more
- quality indicators?
  - “[Quality] indicators included publication channels, selection by libraries and citation rates. With fewer external quality clues available, individuals must make more sophisticated judgments about whether to trust a document or a source.” (Borgmann, 2007).

Research focus: development of trust mechanisms in the Web 2.0 environment, whom do users trust (institutional focused, community-focused, user focused)
Evaluation / negotiation

• new definition of metrics to establish authority, significance, and even scholarly validity (problems with traditional peer-review; where alternatives include open peer-review with a participative, reader-generated approach)
• evaluate information, not the container

Research focus: how users perceive authority, what are “signs” of authority, new evaluation criteria
Non-linearity

• based on the premise that after a linear interpretation and evaluation made possible by IL training one is able to arrive at the unified truth
• Web 2.0 allows individuals to make choices and navigate between options
• taking into consideration multiple perspectives and their respective alternatives

Research focus: Can IL be perceived as a strictly rules-driven process? Is it possible to a priori determine the best information and resources to use or the strategy to apply for solving the problem?
From document-centered to community-centredness

- communities offer opportunities to learn or discover

**Research focus:** the role of communities, socially-constructed information in IL, IL programs or standards, how could we define learning outcomes regarding community
Building reputation, prestige and identity online

- new forms of information practices raise serious questions concerning identity of individuals who contribute to an expanding range of different forms of digital expressions.
- This is not only an issue for users, but also for creators of information.
- e.g. how to maintain a good reputation and research prestige online will be a crucial question for learners or researchers (a good internet-reputation generates attention and influence).
New research themes:

- authority and credibility
- negotiation,
- new information genres
- Communities (research IL as a social, communicative phenomenon - instead of conceptualization of IL as an individual competence)
New research themes:

- How IL happens in this new environments
- what constitutes IL in this new environment
- IL elements
  - new evaluation metrics (evaluate information, not the container)

Current IL research is still reflecting a strong dependence on a print-based culture which is incongruent with the transient and hybrid nature of Web 2.0 environments
References:


- ....
Images:

- http://www.flickr.com/photos/cattycamehome/2220104731/
- http://www.flickr.com/photos/mypixbox/2467422659/lightbox
- http://www.flickr.com/photos/oceanflyn/315385916/
- http://www.flickr.com/photos/krossbow/4365875125
Thank You. Questions?