

The Future of Our Informational Environment

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The first-ever ASIS&T-organized event held in Spain was the workshop *The Future of Information Environments, Thinking and Building with ASIS&T*, held in October in Barcelona, hosted by the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC). In addition to ASIS&T, organizational support was provided by OCLC (Online Computer Library Center), the Librarianship and Documentation Department of the Carlos III University of Madrid (UC3M) and the UOC's Knowledge and Information Management in Organizations (KIMO) research group.

The *Future of Information Environments, Thinking and Building with ASIS&T* began with introductions by **Marta Aymerich**, vice-president of research and strategic planning of the UOC; **Jordi Sánchez-Navarro**, director of the studies of information and communication sciences of the UOC; **Lynn Silipigni Connaway**, president of ASIS&T and senior research scientist and director of user research at OCLC Research (Online Computer Library Center, Inc.) and **Agustí Canals**, director of the UOC's KIMO group.

Next, the introduction of **Virginia Ortiz-Repiso**, professor at the Carlos III University of Madrid and chair of the European chapter of ASIS&T, gave an overview of the trends in innovation in digital information environments, highlighting different facets of the open concept (open data, open learning, open innovation, etc.), in a context that is a challenge for the design of information products and services and for innovation in the training offered to this area of knowledge. A key source for this trend briefing is an extensive study of undergraduate and postgraduate education provided by the International Academic Network Information Schools, which includes the Carlos III University and the UOC.

Then, regarding a more specific initiative, Lynn Silipigni Connaway explained her current project – *Digital visitors and residents: how people engage with technology*. The project aims to identify how people relate to technologies to acquire information and to communicate with others. How do they access information? How do they communicate in the digital environment? Why do they make the decisions they make when using a technology or a social network?

The theoretical framework of visitors and digital residents (V&R) postulates that the way a person relates and uses technology does not depend so much on the age or generation of the individual, but more on the individual's current situation and context. Thus, a digital visitor is characterized by making a functional use of technology, usually linked to a formal need and accustomed to having a fairly passive presence in social networks. In contrast, a resident has a fairly significant online presence and a high level of collaborative activity; his contributions in the digital environment usually leave a certain trace (uploading videos, photos, commenting on networks, etc.). The V&R typology is not a dichotomy, but rather has to be seen as the two

extremes of a continuum. In addition, each of us can behave in different ways in different digital spaces, whether it is the intranet of our organization or Facebook, Twitter, etc. The project has been conducted in the United States, United Kingdom, Italy and Spain, including UC3M and UOC.

The application of the *Digital Visitors & Residents* project in the UOC is especially relevant in order to compare the forms of interaction with the technology of students and teachers in a fully online learning environment with the forms of interaction in hybrid or face-to-face learning environments. In this sense, the following interventions were carried out by **Agustí Canals**, **Eva Ortoll** and **Josep Cobarsí**, professors of the UOC and researchers of the research group KIMO. Some results are curious and remarkable. On the one hand, it is evident one of the postulates of the theoretical framework is the fact that the age of the users does not mean a more intensive use of the technologies, as the comment of one of the interviewed teachers illustrates: “At home at lunchtime, on the weekend, we are together at the table (my wife and my college kids) and it’s the guys who say ‘Do you want to leave the cellphone, please?’” Also during the presentation of the results of the project at the UOC, the importance of different elements became clear. On the one hand, it is clear that there is a need to pay close attention to the human and communication factor in the processes of interaction with the technologies. Interviewees in the project, whether they have a resident profile or have a visitor profile, depending upon the content and situation, consider that the intervention of people in the access and use of digital information is essential

to help give context and credibility to the content with which they access and use. On the other hand, users have a need to deepen the personalization of certain services and products.

A final aspect on which the presentation focused was related to digital infoxication or infoxication. Applying filters to the overabundance of information and communication or applying strategies of digital disconnection seem to be areas in which we must be very attentive.

Also related to the V&R project, some mapping tools were presented by **Lynn Silipigni Connaway** and **Titia van der Werf**, senior program officer, OCLC Research, in an interactive session.

The last talk was by Lynn Silipigni Connaway to explain the role of ASIS&T as an association that offers its members great potential for professional networking in an international environment, with some 2,000 partners worldwide. Virginia Ortiz-Repiso discussed the activities and opportunities to interact with hundreds of members in the ASIS&T Europe Chapter.

All in all, the workshop gave us some clues as to where we should continue to work with researchers and information professionals to offer the best experience of interaction and communication to the users of this so-digital world. In this regard, the potential of the *Digital Visitors & Residents* conceptual approach to typify user behavior and design (or redesign) services and products was revealed in both the results discussed and in an interactive workshop and subsequent discussion of information. ■