Ethics and Trust Building in Digital Scholarship

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Introduction

- New Digital Divide – Usage, quality, access (WSIS, UNESCO UN), generation divide (digital immigrants / digital natives)
- Non-use of Telecentres in Africa and knowledge centres in India
- Studies in Australia, North Ireland, India (Green 2000) have demonstrated that not all haves want to compute
- Study on ICTs in higher education in South Africa has revealed that despite the rise of Web 2.0 tools for sharing information, 25% of students do not share resources using these tools, about 50% does not upload resources using these tools and 67% does not use these resources to publish content. 75% does not use blogs as part of their studies, 67% does not exploit the option of working collaboratively with other students online.
- ATM – usage (early adopters, laggards, and late adopters)
- Selling information to third parties – spam, marketing companies, supermarkets, etc
Paradigm Shift in Scholarly Environment

The scholarly environment has been transforming since the last decade. This transformation has involved:

- Shifting from print environment into mega digital collections
- Research where receipt of manuscript, peer review and publication of journal articles are all done but electronically
- Digital information resources relied upon as primary or complementary information sources of scholarship
- Electronic research collaboration (VRE)
- Teaching using exclusively electronic/blended means
- Evaluation and assessment of academic work electronically
Consequence of Scholarly Environment Transformation

The transformation of scholarship where print was king to an electronic environment has resulted in a new phenomenon known as Digital Scholarship defined as:

‘A networked scholarly or academic environment with pervasive integration of digital technologies in everyday learning and Research’
Drivers of Digital Scholarship

Digital Scholarship is driven by:

• Global library digitisation projects – Google, European Digital Library Project

• Emerging net generation students’ dependence on Google or other search engines for discovery of information resources

• Possibilities offered by Web 2.0 such as social networking sites, wikis, RSS, communication tools and folksonomies that emphasise online collaboration and sharing among users

• Library 2.0 - which integrates all e-resources into a single point of access with a uniform interface

• Patron 2.0 - users who not only consume content but create it as well.
Questions about Digital Scholarship

• **Privacy**: What information about one's self must a person reveal to others, under what conditions and with what safeguards? Are the privacy rights of learners protected? Should third parties be allowed to store or read emails of others without informed consent? Should third parties be permitted to track the visitors on a website?
Questions about Digital Scholarship

• **Accuracy:** Who should be responsible for the authenticity, and accuracy of information centrally stored and shared in an e-environment? Who is to be held accountable for errors in information and how is the injured party to be made whole?

• **Intellectual Property:** Who owns information held centrally and shared? What are the just and fair prices for its exchange? Who owns the channels, through which information is transmitted?

• **Reliability of systems:** Can systems that process, store and communicate information be relied upon in terms of keeping information and the identity of users confidential?
Questions about Digital Scholarship

- **Security**: does the organisation take reasonable steps to protect information from unauthorized use? Is the information infrastructure secure?

- ‘Purchase-to-own’ or ‘purchase-without-ownership rights’

  In the licensing model, the library does not own the content of journals or databases purchased. Instead, the library is granted the license to use the content and after the expiry of the license, the content reverts to the publisher unless the library renews the license.
Questions about Digital Scholarship

• **Integrity:** How is the protection of content against corruption or the alteration of information ensured? The integrity of research process on the internet may pose ethical challenges since the researcher does not have control over the environment in which the research is conducted. How is then the basic ethical principles underlying research namely, respect for persons, beneficence and justice met and upheld?

• **Confidentiality:** How does the organisation ensure that only those with sufficient privileges and a demonstrated need may access certain information?

Through DS interactions, large amounts of personal information is transmitted, collected and processed that could reveal personal details about a learner, tutor, administrator, etc. This raises critical issues that border on human rights, confidence and trust
Questions about Digital Scholarship

- The reward of capturing an increased share of the market through e-means, comes the risk of not having privacy and data security policies in place to protect huge quantities of personal, sensitive and confidential information. The consequences may be litigation and loss of reputation by the service provider.

- Lack of trust in online commercial transactions has been identified as an important barrier to diffusion and adoption of e-commerce.
What is Trust?

Free Dictionary (2008): dependence or reliance on another party whom one is often subordinate, to believe that (someone) is honest and means no harm, to feel that (something) is safe and reliable.

Trust has a cross-disciplinary origin in marketing, social psychology (Erikson, 1963), management (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002) sociology (Lewis and Weigert, 1985), economics (Williamson, 1981), history, anthropology where it has been found a critical factor in customer-service provider relationship especially with regard to productivity, customer satisfaction, etc.
Theories about Trust

Theory of Relationship Marketing: posits that there is a tendency for service providers and customers to form long term relationships (Palmer and Maani, 1995) — alumni, references, job, further studies, etc.

Social-Psychological Model: Trust is a conviction in one’s mind that his or her own interests would be attended to even if the other party was exposed to little supervision or scrutiny — i.e. privacy, data protection, availability, etc.

Institutional Performance Model: institutions that perform well are likely to elicit the confidence of consumers. Service Providers that perform badly or ineffectively generate feelings of distrust and low confidence. The consumer is able to recognize whether institutions are performing well or poorly and reacts — i.e. put demands on service providers accordingly.
Trust Attributes in a Relationship

Trust theoretical models proffer attributes that characterise trust in a relationship which include among others:

- **Competence**: possession of requisite skill and knowledge to perform service - i.e. technical support
- **Responsiveness**: providing speedy feedback to service request
- **Credibility**: believability, honesty of service provider
- **Feeling of security**: freedom from danger, risk or doubt
- **Communication**: listening to customers needs
- **Availability**: continuance of a service activity irrespective of user’s time and location (24/7)
- **Branding**: A powerful tool to sell a product or service
- **Online feedback mechanism**: Interactivity engender trust
Building Trust in DS

- **Digital inclusion**: Diversity of choices of accessing information that allow customer to use a variety of technologies with which to gain access, such as the telephone, fax, e-mail, kiosks, face-to-face interaction, etc.
- **E-strategy** provides a framework for capacity building, defines operational standards, integrates e-information applications in the organisation, caters for adequate cyber infrastructure, etc.
- Libraries can help to **institutionalise digital** scholarship by making available a variety of content in the form of e-journals, e-books, institutional repositories, databases and digital libraries.
- Libraries in university can also consult with authors, publishers, and other stakeholders to develop **suitable business models** that address issues of restrictive copyright regimes to enhance access to digital content.
- **Universal access** is an important policy and legal attribute in promoting digital scholarship because it ensures that information resources are available to all at affordable prices.
Building Trust in DS

• **Interoperability:** ban the sale of inaccessible technology products while enhancing the growth of assistive technology to enhance interactivity and sharing.

• **Interface designs:** which provide varying level of system complexity to cater for users with diverse abilities, skills, and preferences have been found to enhance online learning.

• **User needs:** libraries must deepen their understanding of the information needs of the scholarly community and how existing services mesh with these needs to effectively provide a service.

• **Accreditation** of the content (from the country of origin) can engender trust and satisfaction among users. Such accreditation can serve as an indication of quality and consumer protection.
Building Trust in DS

- **Capacity building:** Digital scholarship in universities can be enhanced by developing e-skills and carrying out information literacy.
- **Response to cyber crime:** Mechanism to respond to cyber crime and misuse of ICTs through effective investigation and prosecution.
- Promoting **cultural and linguistic diversity** online with regard to identity, traditions and religions.
- **Local content** that is relevant to the cultures of the people and in languages all consumers understand.
Conclusion

• Trust is a powerful tool in consumer dynamics but has hardly been applied in the use of digital content. With increased consummation of digital content in teaching, research and overall scholarship, it is important to diversify research in this area to unravel issues of non use of such content even when all other resources are available.

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