

Task 2: Critical Account

**Critical account of
strategies and sources
used in my Literature Review.
Step by step description of my work.**



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A personal journey: interest becomes passion

★ During the Study School, in last March, I had the opportunity to discuss my initial ideas with colleagues and tutors. In truth, choosing the topic for the Literature Review has been not too difficult for me.

At the very beginning, I wanted to analyze the relationship between Internet and Children, focusing on the role of specialistic and school libraries in protecting and helping this particular readers' category. Discussing with the tutor, listening to what a literature review can mean for me and for the whole researchers' community, I changed idea, preferring to follow my first area of interest, my greater "passion": Lifelong Learning and Libraries.

★ During my university studies, I "discovered" a new research trend, which tries to analyze the importance of Learning in our environment, stating with some disappointment that in our University courses and lessons the issue was really underestimated!

Additionally, studying for one year at the Librarianship Faculty of the Barcelona University, I felt the same sensation, discovering at the same time a long literature tradition about the close connection between Learning, but better Lifelong Learning, and our profession. It was a very strange contradiction: many books and many articles had been written up on the topic, many conferences and congress at international level had tried to give a uniform aspect to the problem, but in the daily life and in the specific studies for future librarians, the lifelong education remained a marginal issue. So, for my University Degree, I decided to analyze the topic, focusing on a specific geographic area, studying the "state of the art" in Catalonia. Finding a strong confirmation of the urgency of Lifelong Learning for Information Professionals in the international literature, I discovered- with great surprise!- a variegated environment, rich of important opportunities for the professional who wants to continue to study in Catalonia.

★ At the end of my work, I was able to emphasize some basic principles about the connection between Lifelong Learning and Library and Information Professions:

- ◆ a very rich and strong mainstream about Lifelong Learning and Libraries exists in the literature tradition;
- ◆ the interest about this possible connection comes from the Educative field and from the Information Science at the same time, creating a very stimulating conversation;
- ◆ some specific organisms had been created at the international level, to coordinate the cooperation about the issue all around the world;
- ◆ librarians today understand the importance of being up to date

- referring to their daily activities;
- ◆ librarians today understand the importance of cooperation and of sharing experiences with colleagues;
- ◆ Library managers nowadays recognize the duty to offer to their employees the opportunity to grow, professionally and humanly;
- ◆ user is now our fundamental aim; the efficiency of our operating is directly proportional to our users' satisfaction.

★ My scope had been achieved, I had demonstrated the importance of the lifelong learning for our profession, describing in the detail the application of the theories in a very small geographic reality with a incredibly modernized tradition in the Librarianship field.

Thinking about my work, during these months and studying the material of the master, I found a new way, a new possible perspective to go more in depth into the issue, discovering a wide gap in my university degree: I analyzed the connection between Librarians and Lifelong Learning but from an only one point of view, that is the internal one; we studied what an Information Professional can do to keep up to date about his/her environment.

There is another perspective, following actual trends of the literature, that is the vision of the Library as a Learning Organization: according to this, librarians have to evolve to "educators" and the issue of Lifelong Learning widens its horizons, looking forwards our last aim: the user.

Choosing the topic First steps before writing

- Following tutor's advices, I start compiling a list of keywords (words and phrases) in a sort of diagram, in which I wanted to emphasize connections and links¹.
- According to my university degree, I already had a very good bibliographical base from which starting at least for the description of the general context. Naturally my previous work, presented in March 2004, almost introduced a modernized apparatus of the literature, but not enough modernized because of the deeply contemporary vision I wanted to describe in my Literature Review. For this, reading once again my bibliography and citations, I have operated a initial modernization of the resources, interrogating databases (LISA and ZETOC above all) for "author", inserting the names of those researchers and writers more cited in my previous piece of work.

¹ See Appendix 1.

- I began to interrogate the database to have an idea of the amount of material available on the topic. Through CSA Illumina, selecting Lisa as preferential database, I used a very wide phrase: Lifelong Learning. The result of more than 500 elements, drives me to a more selected method: I used immediately the advanced search, connecting each time the phrase "Lifelong Learning" to different words, such as "Libraries", "Librarian", "Information Professional".
- The result was very useful and I began, more methodologically, to read first articles. It was a very difficult and long work which occupied great part of the months of May and June. At the same time to the reading, I began to write some notes, always schematic, connecting the topics to the various authors. Following tutor's initial advices, I was gradually compiling a rich bibliography using End Note- a very useful tool!- above all in order to eliminate double elements, avoiding to lose precious time.
- July was entirely dedicated to the "arrangement" of the material and to the interrogation of catalogues and OPAC. My city doesn't have a specific library about Librarianship and Information Science, but there is a particular institution, that is CEDOC (Centro di Documentazione della Provincia di Modena), which offers to users some books about this field. Some libraries then, such as the Estense University Library and the Delfini Civic Library, have a rich heritage of documentation, above all handbooks and proceedings of National and International Conferences. All this material is only for consultation, therefore more than a week has been spent consulting documents in the various physical centers.
- The more difficult period was August: it was time to begin to write and organize in a clear way the topic. Before starting with the final and definitive version, I redefine the topic in all its elements, as follows:
 - Scope of the search: to try to solve the great paradox of our profession, finding new ways to conceive ourselves in the contemporary society, in order to recover a strong self esteem and sense of identity.
 - Parameters: the topic is very broad, and it has many correlated issues. I try to give a general context, indispensable to understand in what type of environment we are operating, and then I focused on my core, that is composed of two main arguments to discuss: the concept of Information Literacy and the Reflective Practice in our profession.
 - Languages: the analysis was limited to languages as Italian, English and Spanish. Thanks to specific databases which give me English abstracts, I had the opportunity to know and analyse the opinion of some authors of different nationalities, also writing in different languages.
 - Country, time: no geographic or temporal limits have been applied to the search, thinking about a general Literature

Review, able to demonstrate the importance of the tradition and the advantages and disadvantages of future visions.

Keywords: keywords of initial interrogation have changed, focusing on two "human" elements: "Librarian"/"Information professional"/"Reflective Practitioner" on one side, "User" and "Customer" on the other, and on some concepts "Information Literacy", "Reflective practice", "User training", "Education activities".

Used sources and evaluation

➔ CSA ILLUMINA

It's the most useful tool I've used during my searches. It gives the possibility to consult specific databases, in particular I had interrogated LISA, Library and Information Science Abstracts. I think the structure is precious: every time you insert a search topic, the database shows the connected abstracts. Two types of search are possible: "Quick Search" which offers a only one field to interrogate the database, and "Advanced Search" which gives the possibility to insert many terms, finding more specific documents.

Every time you do a search, CSA produces a interface in which elements are organized by typology: "All publication types", "Journal", "Peer-Reviewed Journals", "Book Review" and "News". For every abstract, CSA offers a range of descriptors, which are very useful to refine our search parameters.

➔ ZETOC

Zetoc helps researches looking for conferences and journals. In my case, it's a very useful tool: many times searching conferences and official papers into the entire World Wide Web could be very difficult. I've used Zetoc to provide correct references about conferences (it's very complicated to be correct quoting official papers) and to verify some dates and authors (filling in specific fields such as "Authors", "ISBN/ISSN" and "Year Published"). This databases offers different types of search: General Search, Conference Search and Journal Search; the first possibility has been the most important during my work, because often I did not know the real support in what I was looking for was published.

➔ ISI Highly Cited

This tool has helped me during all the time of my research, but above all in the first stage, at the moment of the revision of my "old" literature review carried out for my University Degree. This database gives the great opportunity to search by name and when the researcher we are looking for has been found, there is a very useful link to his/her list of publications.

➔ PHYSICAL LIBRARIES

As explained before, I have consulted catalogues, discovering the concrete presence of documentation and books in my city. So, I have spent some days to analyze this material, making photocopies of more interesting pages and studying in the library.

➔ GOOGLE

Looking for specific material, Google can surely be a very dangerous tool, emphasizing material which is not so important and no underlying what is really important, but I have used it in a particular way. Asking databases, I often did not find the full text of the article; in many cases, referring to my topic, the abstract makes me understood that the article would be important. So, in these case, I've used Google to find an alternative way: the results have been quite positive and sometimes I've found, following other links, the full text of the article I needed.

➔ DOIS (Documents in Information Science)

Above all for Spanish documents, this tool presents some advantages, such as the possibility to search in alphabetical order into the whole list of journal and conference papers available on the Web. DOIS offers a vey high percentage of documents available freely in full text.

➔ E-LIS (E-prints in Library and Information Science)

I had used this tool very frequently during my University Degree. Studying and searching for this Literature Review, I've used it but in a reduced way, first of all because of the more detailed search offered by LISA. However, E-Lis can be useful to read articles in full-text, once carried out the research on other databases.

Some personal comments

- I have devoted much time to this work, transforming a university interest in a "red thread" which crosses all my studies. I know that sometimes I have risked, writing up the text, to wander from the subject, but I think I have been able, also maintaining a very wide point of view, to focus my attention on a issue I totally share: the importance of the connection between Learning and Libraries.
- The perhaps too much "fussy" attitude of my review is not a "display of erudition" neither a way to occupy lines, it originates from the "faith" in the power of words. I wanted to clarify linguistic means because conceptual problems are often originated from a wrong interpretation of terms.

● The used quoting method is Harvard System. Thanks to the alphabetical order for authors and the indication of the year , I think it makes the consultation of the entire work easier.

Appendix 1

First ideas

