

Transliteracy: A Unified Construct for Collaborative Online Communities

***Sonal Singh and **Surendra Singh**

*Associate Professor & Head, SoS in Library & Information Science, Vikram University, Ujjain (M.P.); Email: drssonal@rediffmail.com

**Librarian and Head, Department of Library & Information Science, Sandipani College, Ujjain (M.P.), Email: drssurendra04@gmail.com

Abstract

With the emergence of Web 2.0 as an interactive and collaborative platform, the libraries are introducing transliteracy as an essential skill for sharing knowledge among collaborative online communities by the social use of technology. It is an umbrella term which encompasses all literacies, all communication types across the time and culture. It is the breakdown of all the barriers to support the acquisition production and sharing of knowledge through mobile and social networking culture. The paper explains the origin of terms and its slant towards librarianship. The paper also highlights the need and threats of transliteracy and concludes with the essentiality of transliteracy for online social community networks.

Keywords: Literacy, Information Literacy, Transliteracy.

1. Introduction

Information is the Power and libraries are the temples of this power leading the intellectual society towards current and updated information to survive confidently in the global market. Today, every organization maintains its own website. Web 2.0 has become the most dynamic, collaborative and interactive platform with read and write facility and allows users to express their views and publish them online through blogs, wikis etc. Accordingly, Librarianship has undergone radical changes to adapt multiple skills and strategies as per changing attitude of users in the global era. The Librarianship, is a techno oriented profession, managing community based information system through internet, mobile technology and social networking sites. The 21st century librarians are the Masters of Web who organize, design, build and create their own website and also provide link to other useful websites. The libraries are serving as electronic access point with universal scope to retrieve information from global network. It acts as a local centre for information and also a local gateway to national and global knowledge. The modern library demands from the librarian to be the technical expert, search intermediary and instructor who must teach the users about the most efficient ways to identify, analyze critically, access the needed information and use it wisely. Thus, literary programs are the essential need for making the users self sufficient to access, use and evaluate the information. In fact, the information literacy, media literacy, digital literacy and ultimately the transliteracy are the back-bone of 21st century librarianship to promote lifelong learning.

2. Literacy and its Types

Literacy is traditionally understood as the ability to read and write and illiteracy is inability to read and write, a literacy means one can read and write but have no interest in doing so, and transliterate

means one who is literate across multiple media. Literacy represents the lifelong, intelligent process of gaining meaning from a critical interpretation of written or printed text. ¹

With the changing methods of learning, the concept of literacy also modify so as to include skills to access information through technology. Accordingly literacy may be of different types. ²

- 1- **Digital Literacy** – Cognitive skills that are used in executing tasks in digital environment.
- 2- **Computer Literacy** – Ability to use a computer and software.
- 3- **Media Literacy** – Ability to think critically about different types of media.
- 4- **Information literacy** – Ability to evaluate, locate, indentify and effectively use information.
- 5- **Technology Literacy** – Ability to use technology effectively in several different ways.
- 6- **Political Literacy** – Knowledge and skills needed to actively participate in political matters.
- 7- **Cultural Literacy** – The knowledge of one’s own culture.
- 8- **Multicultural literacy** – The knowledge and appreciation of other cultures.
- 9- **Visual Literacy** - The ability to critically read images.
In addition, it is common to hear about some more types of literacies like-
- 10- **Biliteracy** – Knowing how to read in two or more languages.
- 11- **Mathematical Literacy/ Numeracy** – Mastery of the basic symbols and processes of Arithmetic.
- 12- **New Media Literacies** – Literacies in digital mediums and on the Internet, involving the new tools of hypertext, multimedia and electronic forms of synchronous and asynchronous communication.
- 13- **Global Literacy** – Understanding the interdependence among people and nations and having the ability to interact and collaborate successfully across cultures.

21st century librarianship demands for a new skill to promote literacy across technological barriers, known as transliteracy.

3. Transliteracy

Transliteracy is the ability to communicate meaning between media. Transliteracy is the ability to read, write and interact across a range of platforms, tools and media from signing and orality through handwriting, printing, TV, radio and film, to digital social networks ³. Transliteracy is an umbrella term which encompasses all literacies, all communication types across the time and culture. Trnasliteracy is the breakdown of all the barriers to support the acquisition, production and sharing of knowledge in collaborative online communities. It is a way to navigate an ever increasing array of communication and information sources. Transliteracy is a common term for all literacy and aims towards successful navigation. It is an essential skill in the internet age of mobile and social networking culture. Though, transliteracy is not a term from library field, but is increasingly used in the present era to dissolve the conflict between print and digital. It is an extension of previous ideas, applied to ever increasing communication tools of online community.

It is 21st century literacy which is a unified construct for collaborative online communities. It is an effort to make them ‘literate’ – across all communication platforms. Infact it is the relationship between people and technology, specifically social networking and is not limited to a particular technology. Its main focus is on social use of technology.

3.1 Origin

The word ‘Transliteracy’ is derived from the verb to transliterate, meaning to write or print a letter or word using the closest corresponding letters of a different alphabet or language. It means the use of letters of one language to write down a different language.

The concept of transliteracy was first developed by the transliteracies research project, headed by Alan Liu from the Department of English at the University of California, Santa Barbara. It was a cross disciplinary project group with its main focus on the study of online reading. It was shared and refined

at Transliteracies conference held at University of California, Santa Barbara (USA) in 2005. Sue Thomas, Professor of new media at De Monfort University (Leicester, UK) attended the transliteracies conference held by this group in 2005, and has since built upon their to develop the key concepts and working definition of transliteracy. The conference inspired Professor Sue Thomas to create the Production in Research and Transliteracy (PART) group, which has now evolved into transliteracy research group⁴. It is clear that transliteracy was used as a means to foster the reading and writing facet in both English-speaking countries. Initially, the focus was on English teaching. Later in France, the transliteracy was used to mean the convergence of media, information and computer literacies. In this way, the original emphasis on basic literacy was shifted to enhanced information search with ICT driven media specifically social networks.

3.2 Transliteracies and Librarianship

Libraries are the social institutions devoted towards construction of informative society, for which effective communication is of prime importance. To fulfill the basic objective, transliteracy became the essential skill of 21st century librarianship to denote all types of literacies used for communication through social networks. It is the ability to understand multiple media and modes of communication in the online community networks. It helps librarians to proactively share and spread information among online community networks, and to interact with community. The libraries are now providing web enabled services. Most libraries have their own user friendly website where user can locate database, online catalogue and digital texts, and an institutional repository for scholarly production of the institution. It also acts as a communication tool to communicate with users through various social networking tools like face book, twitter etc. Librarians try to make it multilingual and easy to navigate. Librarians guide the users about the ways to find valuable information through transliteracy programs. It is necessary to provide web based quality information services to the users in e-learning environment, involving new mechanisms for communication such as, computer networks, multimedia, content portals, search engines, social networking sites and web enables classrooms. The libraries have to integrate all relevant information on website as per future needs of the users. In addition to technical skills, librarians need to develop communication, facilitation, training and management skills to play their role successfully in the connected networked world. Librarian should become the master of web who with an ability to create a powerful website for easy sharing, electronic information gathering, electronic pathfinders and frond end search tools, creation of online tutorials and instructional web pages, links to other websites for specific topics.

3.3 Need of Transliteracy in libraries

Followings are the major need of transliteracy in libraries:

- For effective communication across all communication platforms.
- For enhances information search across social networks.
- For sharing knowledge among collaborative online communities.
- Common platform for all types of literacies.
- To understand multiple media and modes of communication in online community.
- Essential skill to dissolve conflict between print and digital.
- To manage community based information system.

3.4 Threats for Transliteracy

Following threats related to the transliteracy were observed:

- Poor internet connectivity
- Unavailability of infrastructure
- Unskilled library staff
- Fear about web technology

4. Conclusion

Transliteracy is not a term from the library field but is gaining increasing importance in recent era of online social communication. The libraries are adopting transliteracies for interaction with communities through social networks. The libraries should be provided with strong wi-fi connectivity. In-service training programs should be organized to make the LIS professionals well acquainted with online communication skills across all the platforms and media. Transliteracy is a boon to enrich user friendly library services. Infact it is the back bone of 21st Century librarianship for social use of technology.

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