Chapter 12

Research 2.0:
The Contribution of Content Curation and Academic Conferences

Maria J. Spilker
Universidade Aberta, Portugal

Maria Paula Silva
Universidade Aberta, Portugal

Lina Morgado
Universidade Aberta, Portugal

ABSTRACT

This chapter highlights two moments of the research cycle, gathering and making sense of information and receiving insights from peers as well as performing a dissemination of results, focusing on key competences of researchers 2.0. Content curation is a strategy to manage information and improve Personal Knowledge Management, and it is crucial for the research work, which demands specific (digital) competences from the researcher. The use of Web 2.0 tools at academic conferences is an example of a competence mastered by researchers. Conferences are spaces for sharing knowledge and for networking. Their main functions can be potentiated through means like social media, allowing the development and/or strengthening of researchers 2.0 core competencies, such as collaborative work, proficiency in handling emerging technologies for research, and efficient dissemination of research results.

INTRODUCTION

Technology is transforming the academic practice (Weller, 2011). Web 2.0 tools and services, such as blogs, wikis and social media, paired with mobile-devices, have an impact in the way research is being undertaken, providing and promoting new forms of information sharing and collaboration settings for researchers. Researchers are exploring the potentials and challenges of e-research (Oxley & Light, 2009), using the Web for "data collection, literature review, analysis, or dissemination phases of the research process" (T. Anderson & Kanuka, 2003, p. xv).

Web 2.0 is "an umbrella term for a host of recent internet applications such as social networking, wikis, folksonomies, virtual societies, blogging, multiplayer online gaming and mash-ups" (Selwyn, 2008). In this context, research coined as 'Science 2.0', 'Cyberscience 2.0', 'Open Research', 'Open Science' and 'eScience' (Bartling & Friesike, 2014) has become prominent. Not being a consensual definition, the Science/Research 2.0 describes the support of researchers and of the research process through technologies of the Web 2.0 (Waldrop, 2008).

If, on the one hand, the use of emerging technology brings benefits, on the other hand, it forces researchers to face new challenges. The great number of tools induces sometimes a feeling of overload, the expected ease-of-use is foremost attached with a steep learning curve, and as soon as a tool is released, the faster it vanishes from the market. Likewise, sharing information on the Internet can lead to information overload and, even more difficult to sort out, it questions the information quality and issues associated with intellectual propriety and content ownership.

The use of ICT, in order to enhance the scientific production, has had an effect on academia roles and practices, requiring the development of new competencies, such as conducting online data collection and embarking on a detailed analysis of great amounts of data, or access to digitalized literature all around the world and almost in real-time (e.g., immediate online access to conference proceedings). The strategies of content curation and the attendance of academic conferences, supported by emerging technologies, can be included in the new practices of scholars and researchers contributing to an efficient dissemination of knowledge and to the creation of a digital identity of academics, across the scientific community and reaching society in general (Cochrane et al., 2013).

Bookmarking, using tools such as Diigo or Blundr, is a facility already in use by researchers to find, filter, organize and share information. However, advanced processes of information management are being displayed as well. Content curation, an emerging strategy to deal with information, knowledge and research, is at present being adopted in education and training fields (Antonio & Tuffley, 2015; Mihailidis & Cohen, 2013). In this chapter the authors characterize the term and the underlying attributes, skills and key tasks of a content curator, and point out some useful tools for the process of content curation.

Content curation can be used as a plan of action to enhance the knowledge exchange and social learning which are associated with the attendance of academic events. Academic conferences are usually perceived as an opportunity to share research results, to receive insight from experts for ongoing research projects, and to expand networks. Through the use of social media, such as Twitter, it is possible to disseminate the research results, not only to the conference audience, but also to the online audience who is following the conference. At the same time, academic conferences are the ideal space to develop and consolidate competencies intrinsic to Research 2.0. In this chapter, the authors present a case study on the use of Web 2.0 tools by Master's students.

In brief, the authors will seek to elucidate the reasons why the strategy of content curation and the practice of attending academic conferences are of importance for Research 2.0.

CURATION FOR RESEARCH 2.0

Information overload seems to be the price of a digitalized world. The access to information is, at first, seen as an immense opportunity. Scientific books and articles are available not only at a (physical) library, but also online. In addition, blog posts, comments and discussions in forums, tweets, etc. are available

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