Chapter 10
Bringing the Librarian to Online Courses:
Cognitive, Social, and Teaching Presence

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the way one librarian is bringing real-time, personalized instruction to students in online classes to engage them dynamically with their library and provide the best possible learning experiences. The discussion is grounded in the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework, perhaps the most widely accepted model of online learning, and suggests that learning online is supported by three "presences": cognitive, social, and teaching. The model and each presence are discussed first, followed by virtual library instruction being introduced. Virtual library instruction is seen as the way to ensure equity in providing library services for fully online students and, specifically, information literacy instruction. The authors discuss how virtual librarians can use cognitive, social, and teaching presence to make their instruction more effective. Specific tools, strategies, and best practices are presented, as are general recommendations for similar development.

INTRODUCTION

Online learning is no longer an anomaly in American higher education. According to the Sloan-C annual survey (Allen & Seaman, 2010), in the Fall 2009 semester, over 5.6 million (or 30%) of all higher education students in the United States took at least one online course. Moreover, the 21% growth in online enrollments for that year far exceeded the 2% growth in the overall higher education population. Online learning is growing even faster in the K12 sector. Sloan-C estimated that the total number of K12 students engaged in online learning in the 2007/2008 school year was

over 1 million, a 47% increase from the 2005/2006 school year (Picciano & Seaman, 2009).

The sweeping technological changes that have affected education have also transformed academic libraries, which now increasingly invest in electronic resources and utilize web sites as their main point of access to all resources. Librarians have always played an important role in the academic success of students and in facilitating lifelong learning. Traditionally this has been done by providing students with instruction on research and information resources. Face-to-face instruction is personal and gives librarians the opportunity to get to know their students and community patrons. Because many librarians now 'see' students and other patrons only virtually, their ability to offer personalized online instruction is crucial.

This chapter explores the way I (Nancy) am bringing real-time, personalized instruction to students in online classes to engage them with their library and offer the best possible learning experiences. The discussion will be grounded in the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework developed by Garrison, Anderson, & Archer (2000), and perhaps the most widely accepted model of online learning. The CoI framework is a process model of learning in online environments which suggests that learning online is supported by three 'presences' (cognitive, social, and teaching). The model and each presence are first discussed, followed by virtual library instruction. The authors discuss how virtual librarians can use cognitive, social and teaching presence to make their instruction more effective. Specific tools, strategies and effective practices are presented, and general recommendations for similar development are given.

COMMUNITY OF INQUIRY FRAMEWORK

Built upon the core elements of cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence, the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000) posits that online learning results from engaging a community in a course of inquiry. In this model of inquiry, knowledge construction is a process implemented via cognitive, social, and teaching presence as described in the sections that follow. Figure 1 illustrates that the core of these intersecting elements is a collaborative, constructivist educational experience that is consistent with the writings of J. Dewey (1938). Together, the two key ideas of community and inquiry form a pragmatic organizing framework of sustainable principles and processes for the purpose of guiding online educational practice (Swan, Garrison, & Richardson, 2009).

Cognitive Presence

In the CoI framework, cognitive presence is defined as the extent to which learners are able to construct and confirm meaning through course activities, sustained reflection, and discourse in online environments. It is presented as consisting of the four phases of practical inquiry (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000; adapted from Dewey, 1933), which begins with a triggering event,

Figure 1. Community of Inquiry Framework. Adapted from Garrison, Anderson, & Archer (2001). Used by permission.
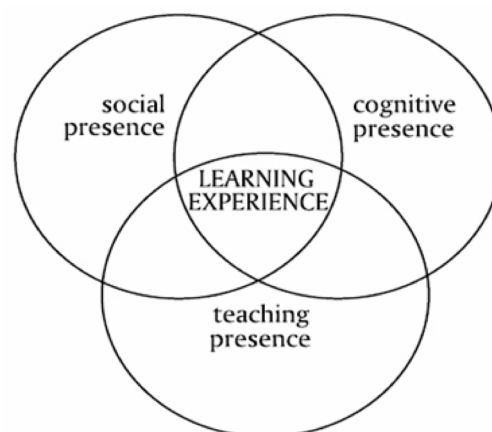
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