

Favouring a Critical, Creative and Ethical Use of the Network Resources Through Web 2.0 Applications

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Introduction

One of the primary objectives of any modern educational systems is to prepare and orient learners to a lifelong-learning culture allowing them to perform in the Knowledge Society.

In the contemporary networked world we already make an intense and pervasive use of the network applications in the management of our personal knowledge. Nonetheless, while using available telematic systems, we are gaining the awareness about the importance of acquiring more critical, creative and ethical abilities in the processes related to the management of our knowledge.

Web 2.0 tools and methods can favour the acquisition of such abilities. To this end the first aim of this work is to **analyse the meaning of critical, creative and ethical use of the network and its resources**. The second aim is to identify classes of tools and specific applications which can support the acquisition of such abilities and the third aim is provide suggestions on the practical application of such tools in the daily practice of “knowing knowledge” [Siemens, 2006]. The overall goal of this work is to highlight how Web 2.0 strategies and tools can provide significant methodological innovation in the effective management of our personal knowledge.

The issues of the development and the acquisition of competences (Personal Knowledge Management Skills) required to support the lifelong learners in the Knowledge Society has been treated in previous works [Cigognini et al, 2007] [Pettenati e Cigognini, 2007] [Pettenati et al, 2007]). In such works we also concluded discussing the importance of extending *digital literacy* and *information and communication fluency skills* to encompass a more critical, creative and ethical use of the network information and relations.

Critical abilities

Such abilities are referred to the critical use of the network and its resources that is the evaluation of contents and relations. Contents need to be evaluated as for their quality, accuracy, reliability and pertinence; network relations (subjects) need to be evaluated as for their trustworthiness and reputation.

Web 2.0 tools – which are developed to meet the needs and changing attitudes of users which are both content producers and consumers (prosumers [Fallows, 2006]), can support the development of such abilities:

- *Folksonomies*: their functions of shared classification of knowledge, allow a qualitative selection of the resources oriented to the social networking (tag cloud views, user sociograms, etc.);
- Resources digging tools: provide support to the attribution of resources popularity which influence the presentation that specific contents can have inside a given network environment;
- Ranking of audio-, video-, and photo-sharing; qualify the value and the popularity of a multimedia resource;
- social bookmarking tools: allow sharing of accredited resources also between specific groups and communities (eg. students, interest groups, etc.);
- comments-diaries (blog): provide direct expression capabilities to publish reflections and comments framed in social networks of readers and writers. Through such tools the subject-author becomes an active node for the development of “trusted networks” based on reputational issues, thus becoming a reputed resource “filter”.

Creative abilities

These concern the possibility to engender new approaches and standpoints which are favoured by the creation and multi-modal access to multi-media contents through blogs, wikis and mindtools for the representation of the knowledge and through photo-, video- and audio-sharing for the multimedia access to contents.

Such tools allow from one side the definition of new relations, triggered by social networks (linked by affinity of goals, interests, sense of belonging, entertainment purposes, etc.) and from the other side the micro-contents aggregation (mashup) favouring the development and evolution of new languages as well as a creative use of knowledge.

Ethical abilities

This aspect is strictly related to identity/ies assumed by a subject on the network. Due to its digital representation the online identity inevitably brings concerns about the security of its management. The possibility of assuming multiple context-dependent and also anonymous identities, calls for the definition of proper solutions for the management of digital identities, the reputation management, the implementation of technological security in communication as well as in the management of contents and relations. Tools supporting the development of such aspects are: identity meta-systems, for the unified management of multiple and multi-contexts identities; reputation management systems (use of automatic or manual feedbacks for the evaluation of behaviours, contents, etc.); environments and tools for preserving the safety of relations (for children protected categories); privacy management systems and mechanisms for the protection of intellectual property rights.

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Biographies

Elisabetta Cigognini is currently PhD student in Telematics and Information Society by the Telematics Laboratory of the Electronics and Telecommunications Department of the University of Florence. In 2004 she was granted the post-graduate Master title in "e-Learning Project Management and Design" by the University of Florence; she collaborated as instructional designers and eTutor both in corporate and in academic contexts. Her main research interests concern instructional design, collaborative working environment, learning and knowledge management, e-learning and e-knowledge.

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