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**NEW PERSPECTIVES IN TRANSLITERACY AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE FRENCH
“PROFESSEUR-DOCUMENTALISTE”**

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This contribution is a presentation and a critical reflection on the professional identity of the French *professeur-documentaliste* through its current curriculum, the scientific content of academic and training courses, and through educational practices in schools. This identity has to take into account a new social, technological, academic and institutional environment within the digital era, to define new cross-contents of “information” and to evolve toward new educational and professional practices for changing needs. My point of view is that of someone who is in charge of teaching, training and working with those *professeurs-documentalistes* who will be responsible for the management of information in the pupils' academic and cultural learning process. My remarks are based on the analysis of the institutional frame of the training curriculum and teaching activities of the *professeurs-documentalistes*. It is also an attempt to explain the present scientific and political debate on their role in the process of building a shared culture of information at school. I would like to question the foundation of professional skills and knowledge, from the living process of the construction of a professional identity, as well as the relationship between this living process, the progress of the so-called information or knowledge society, and the emergence of new scientific questions in the academic field. I think that we are at a crossroads and that

the questioning status of *the professeur-documentaliste* in France embodies several interesting questions on media and information literacy. Transliteracy outlines these questions, including innovative practices and solutions to educational questions about information today.

1 The professional identity and training of the *professeurs-documentalistes* and the construction of an information culture at school

In order to understand the emerging questions of information literacy and culture in France nowadays, I need to remind some historical facts about the social construction of the *professeur-documentaliste*.

1-1 « Professeur-documentaliste » : an hybrid professional culture

As you may know, France made the choice, in 1989, to create a specific function, the *Professeur-documentaliste*, who has the academic and professional status of a teacher but who does not teach a scholarly discipline nor is in charge of a specific curriculum inside the school program. When the school librarian became a teacher, recruited according to his mastery of documentation techniques, information science and pedagogic skills, the interest in education and pedagogy with and about information became more important. The professeurs-documentalistes considered themselves teachers above all, being trained as such, and had to create their own curriculum inside the institution but without a real program.

The training was delivered by the IUFM, (University institute for school teachers) over two years, the first year dedicated to the competition exam with a program based on

information, education science, and documentation techniques, the second year, for those who succeeded, to professional training, part time in a school, part time at the university. The academic teams who were in charge of this field developed reflection and research on the cognitive role of information in several directions: competencies in using information for school needs, book reading, media literacy, development of the critical skills necessary to become an active citizen in a democracy, cultural openness to art, literature and science, mastering of language and communication, and, since the 2000', use of the computers and internet to work with information. These educational aims had to be combined with the charge of a library, the ability to implement a documentation policy, and the competency to manage information into the school. The training had to make one field with three separate gardens: education with and on information on the one hand, techniques of documentation on the other, with another garden being culture in general at school.

This double founding culture for the *professeurs-documentalistes* may have satisfied some who enjoy working with pupils, helping them discover the pleasure of reading books and finding information and coaching them toward a responsible use of information in their lives. Some behave more like teachers and work with entire classes, creating projects with colleagues from other disciplines, while others behave more like librarians, guiding individuals into the labyrinth of books and culture, providing the school community with documentation but not especially involved in pedagogic activities or projects. Others have become computer specialists and help with technological needs as experts are often lacking in schools. Some are not satisfied with this uncertainty and would like their pedagogic identity to be recognized and emphasized. Thus, the identity of the *professeur-documentaliste* has been progressively built in a DIY process based on self-constructed

expertise on information (Gardiès, 2011), which, at a certain point, had to meet political requirements and scientific constructions. It opens a large scale of debate and reflection, within academic teams, in the Ministry of education and in the *Association des professeurs-documentalistes*, (the federation of school librarians, FADBEN). The FADBEN has worked for many years to define more precisely the role and mission of the *professeur-documentaliste*. It has especially tried to restrain the trend of the Ministry of education to erase the education part of the profession and emphasize the technical part, in order to make the *professeur-documentaliste* a school librarian and an information specialist and manager in the school.

1-2 Education, information and the Center of documentation and information as a unifying space

On a pragmatic point of view, the *professeur-documentaliste* is in charge of the school library in middle and high schools, called “CDI”, (Center for Documentation and Information), which is supposed to support the pupils and the teachers in their search for information. It provides not only books related to school work, but also leisure literature – or at least literature which may give them the desire to read, and creates a working environment allowing them to research topics. All schools have such a CDI, which is usually situated at the spatial center of the school.

The mission of the people in charge of the CDI has been defined in 1986 with 4 major fields:

- Information literacy: Training the pupils in information and documentation use. Information needs, retrieval tools, selection, use, understanding and organization are pointed out as the main activities.

- Education: Working with all the teachers and the school team in order to help pupils in their school work, especially those who encounter difficulties. The CDI is described as a place where social inequalities should be balanced with a large cultural offering.
- Culture and communication: Linking school to the cultural, academic, professional environment.
- Bibliotheconomy: Being in charge of a multimedia documentation center.

This definition is outdated, and the information context has completely changed since 1986. The emergence of digital technologies in everyday life has also questioned the role of school in the use of tools which can at the same time be useful to get necessary information for academic or professional work, and be damaging to the safety of children and personal freedom. Most CDI are equipped with computers, but digital uses and practices differ from school to school, depending on equipment and access to the internet, the policies of the headmasters, and the capacity of the *professeur-documentaliste* to manage the use of these computers. The CDI is first of all a library with a catalog, using a special thesaurus designed for schools (Motbis), the Dewey Decimal Classification and an OPAC which is usually the same everywhere, based on the database BCDI. The CDI is open all day and the pupils can come to work individually or with their classes, with a teacher. As the OPAC is the same from Middle school to High school, pupils are used to it. Nevertheless, when they go to university, they usually do not make the link between information retrieval in the CDI and in the university library, and have to get used to new information tools. It is the reason why some *professeurs-documentalistes* have started to work with university librarians to provide university level tools and working habits to high school pupils in order to prepare them for their future documentation needs (Despouys, Lehmans, 2011). They visit the libraries to

carry out research projects with specialized database, scientific reviews and university catalogs.

Thereby, the CDIs can be considered as unifying spaces for the pupils, and even mediating spaces: with the same spatial organization, the same codes and the same tools, they provide a familiar informational structuring environment where the pupils can expect the help and training of an information professional. Many discipline programs mention the CDI as a place where pupils are supposed to go, get information and work with, especially when they work on projects. The real space is often completed with a virtual space, either on a virtual office where the pupils can find documents, or on a web site where the *professeur-documentaliste* organizes documentation through special pages. Some *professeurs- documentalistes* also use social networks, creating a Facebook or a Twitter account for the CDI, in order to disseminate information using popular tools.

Recently, the debate between professional organization and the Ministry of education concerning the learning centres has been focused on by the Ministry as a satisfying technical and material solution to the information needs of the pupils, where the professionals focus on pedagogic practices above techniques. The focus on the space and techniques is perceived as a threat to the people who could be considered as useless.

2 A changing institutional context in a moving social context

Since 2009, the academic curriculum of all the teachers has changed in France. A master's degree is necessary, and the training is more centered on academic, didactic and theoretical knowledge, with less importance given to pedagogic and educational training through teaching practice. This has accelerated the emphasis on a structured academic framework

for the training based on scientific notions. Meanwhile, the cultural, educational and social context of information at school has rapidly evolved within the so-called knowledge society based on cultural industries and Y generation. The need for the implementation of a solid culture of information among pupils is stronger than ever, but the uses and practices are constantly evolving.

2-1 New curricula for new informational practices

Most of the new teachers have encountered pupils for no more than a few weeks, and discover how to manage classes when they start working full time. This has changed the organization and academic content of the curriculum for the future *professeurs-documentalistes*. This curriculum is based on information science and management, cognition and education science. On the university side, according to the course contents, the curricula are focused on scientific concepts of information and education, information and technical tools for documentation, epistemology of information and communication sciences, sociology, economy and right of information, knowledge of information systems, knowledge management, professional and multimedia reading and writing techniques, professional librarian and documentation tools (languages, norms, indexation, cataloging,...), sociological, political, management, ethical, cognitive and cultural understanding of education topics, teaching engineering, digital information monitoring and organization, culture and documentary mediation...

The students spend 2 weeks in a CDI during the first year observing the context, and 4 weeks the second year, being in charge of a real CDI coached by a *professeur-documentaliste*. They are supposed to experience all the facets of the job, especially the bibliotheconomy

techniques and pedagogic management, including projects with pupils with and without other teachers. During the second year, they have to write a thesis. In Bordeaux , the students have focused their interest on book reading, media culture, arts and culture education and mediation, children's literature, citizenship in media, information for schools and professional guidance, information tools for disabled pupils...This current year, the students are more focused on technical and professional tools than on educational topics : OPAC, conservation policies, digital humanities, alongside with media literacy and analysis of the practices of the teenagers on the internet.

In the schools, three main institutional references (Cordier, 2011) are the framework of the educational practices : the FADBEN's *Référentiel de Compétences Documentaires* (Information Competency Framework) dating from 1997 and inspired by the Big Six Skills model from Michael Eisenberg and Robert Berkowitz, the *Socle commun de compétences* (common set of core competencies), which includes digital competencies through the B2I (*Brevet Informatique et Internet* : computer and internet certificate), dating from 2006, the PACIFI, *Parcours de culture de l'information et de formation à l'information* (information literacy and information training course), which was published in 2010. The FADBEN model was criticized because of its oversimplification and the linearity of the information research process description. The B2I was created in order to take into account and evaluate the educational needs around digital information and computer uses in the information society. It contains three aims: first, appropriation of a digital working environment, second, responsibility toward information, creation, production, treatment, data exploitation, information retrieving and documentation, third, communication and exchange. This

description of necessary skills has been criticized because they are process and technology oriented but do not aim at any real knowledge.

PACIFI was published by the Ministry of Education in order to produce landmarks for a continued and lifelong education on information at school, a sort of guidebook. It proposes 10 entries: information needs, research, evaluation, knowledge organization, data bases, organized sources of knowledge, documentation centers and libraries, media, search engines and an ethical attitude towards information. These entries are supposed to guide the teachers into a training process which is not a curriculum but nonetheless a continuum. They create a teaching model based on information search skills. For each entry, a definition is proposed with a link to the school curriculum and objectives and activities are included. For the entry “evaluation of information”, for example, the PACIFI suggests making the pupils from 12 to 14 apply the 5 W questioning process to an online video, or to make the pupils from 16 to 18 find the primary source of an information which has been circulating on social networks.

These three institutional formalized frames to information literacy programs at school do not explicitly refer to recent UNESCO publications and works on information literacy, except for a reference to the 2003 Prague Declaration in the PACIFI. They have been criticized for two opposite reasons: first, they do not take into account the informal, intuitive and yet relevant and efficient information practices of young people, second, they do not aim for a real cognitive construction of knowledge around information, but only pragmatic skills and useful competencies, preparing people for industrial needs but not necessarily for democracy and autonomy. On the one hand, they are too formal to be efficient, on the other, they do not create a strong culture of information which could be the foundation of a

real critical and analytical behavior towards information and communication in a digital environment.

This changing environment meets the professional demand of a specification and specialization in information science for the professional identity of the *professeur-documentaliste*.

2-2 New debates : didactic / mediation as responses to information literacy

French scholars have started to question the role of information in the construction of knowledge, following the emergence of the concept of information literacy, and to criticize its reliability in explaining the role education should play in the mastery of information for everybody. The concept of a culture of information has emerged as the French version of information literacy. In the scientific and professional literature, the culture of information is based on the mastering of theoretical knowledge on information while information literacy is based on pragmatic skills. Culture is based on a high vision of human rights and the educational aim of building wise, equal and free citizens, while information literacy is based on the aim of building adapted workers for the information society. This is of course a caricature but the literature is quite clear on the point that culture should be differentiated from skills, that critical tools are more important than simple recipes on information. According to Yolande Maury (2011), information literacy is based on the concept of empowerment, "the mechanism by which people, organizations, and communities gain mastery over their lives" that should be distinguished from autonomy, the capacity of creating its own rules, which supposes knowledge and criticism, and not only competencies

and skills. Brigitte Juanals (2003) sees 3 steps into the process of construction of the culture of information:

- The mastery of access to information
- The culture of access to information
- The culture of information

The critics of institutional and formal education have given birth to a wide range of research since 2003 in several teams, the main being Erté (Team for research and technology for education) on Informational culture (2007-2010). Some of the researchers try to identify a corpus of knowledge and a specific didactic aiming at the construction of a real curriculum, and some are looking at the creation of a new discipline at school (information as a cultural morphology). Others emphasize a bottom-up knowledge construction based on real behaviors and informal skills aiming at the building of a real citizen's autonomy and a responsible attitude toward information (information as a social and cognitive construction)

Starting from this reflection on information literacy and the role that *professeurs-documentalistes* should play, these two different paths have been explored. For some of the scholars working in this field, and for a large part of the professionals represented by FADBEN, information should be taught as other disciplines, the referent science being that of information, communication and documentation. It embodies a corpus of knowledge, a range of aims, methods and evaluating activities, and needs a didactic work on scientific notions in order to make them teachable (Duplessis 2012). These notions are described in a dictionary of information and documentation concepts (2007) published on a major professional website, SavoirsCDI, with more or less conceptual notions such as URL, author,

information need.... For each item, a definition, a didactic reflection and correlated terms are proposed. The aim of this work is to create a corpus of school knowledge to be taught and not only a list of skills, learning objectives and activities and specific didactic tools. In this mainstream, the teaching activity of the *professeur-documentaliste* is central. Agricultural education is applying such a specific teaching, and all the diplomas contain between 20 and 30 hours per year dedicated to information and documentation.

For the other mainstream, which has focused the attention on information activities of pupils, the culture of information is also central, but it has to be treated by the “referential social practices” i.e. real activities, in order to make people aware of their own cognitive process. This bottom-up perspective changes the status of the *professeur-documentaliste* who is considered a mediator between practices and knowledge, documents and school discipline, books and culture. The mediation process implies a certain obliteration of the professor who lets the pupils organize their own path into information within activities, tools, a coaching more than a teaching posture and spaces that he has structured (Cordier 2011). Personal, informal, intuitive, collective practices become central in this reflection, and the aim of the teacher is to create situations in which pupils can experiment various ways of retrieving and using information in order to build knowledge. The mediation process is human (intersubjective), spatial (organization and signage of the spaces), and technical (Liquète 2011).

However centered on a corpus of notions (reference knowledge) or on a pedagogic posture toward social practices, the professional reflection has moved from technical skills centered on documentation techniques to the theoretical definition of the culture of information, and changes the objective of training people to retrieve information to that of making them

understand what they do with information. Eric Delamotte (2007) uses a practical notion to resume this shift: he thinks that education should move from information literacy to knowledge literacy.

3 Toward a transliteracy perspective

The debates among scholars about the culture of information have led them to open the reflection on transliteracy.

3-1 Transliteracy as an arena for cooperation between sciences

Transliteracy is “the ability to read, write and interact across a range of platforms, tools and media from signing and orality through handwriting, print, TV, radio and films, to digital social networks.” (Thomas 2007) The interest in transliteracy in research programs is focused on the universe of reading through the “big bang” of the web with new media, materials, sensitive experience, social organizations, cognitive operation and formal characteristics (Liu, 2012).

However, in France, transliteracy is taken into an epistemic and conceptual framework more than into a pragmatic reflection on competencies, abilities and skills required to deal with information in the digital era. It means a new perspective on information culture which includes cross-cultural and critical knowledge about information, media and computer science. Compared to Jenkins’ point of view, for example, the focus is on epistemic questions and the importance of defining the concepts, of transforming them into educational goals which do not exclude concerns for participation, networking and creation. This definition task concerns scientists but also professionals (teachers and social workers)

and pupils and students who have to master not only skills but also a critical knowledge on information which will give the power to understand, criticize and choose to use or not the information, entertainment and technological tools they can use.

A research group is trying to synthetize these questions, working on the concept of transliteracy and taking into account the theoretical and epistemological point of view as well as the pragmatic perspective of the real uses of information. The Limin'R project (**Littératies Informatique, Médias, Information –Recherche**) directed by Divina Frau-Meigs (Sorbonne Nouvelle), Éric Bruillard (ENS Cachan) and Éric Delamotte (Université de Rouen) is aiming to define an integrated approach to the culture of information which blends several areas of knowledge into one object; information through the use of common measuring tools, concepts, cartography. Other projects are in progress such as CACI (Cartographies Avancées de Contenus Informationnels, Advanced cartography of informational contents) directed by Eric Delamotte, which aims to create web mapping on information science concepts, a working group at the French UNESCO Committee and several publications.

According to Vincent Liquete (2011), the “trans” prefix refers to, in the same time, transversal, across different fields of knowledge, and transformation, from individual and social practices to knowledge about these practices. The 3 main fields are media, computer digital science, and information and communication science. This emerging reflection is the center of several current research programs in various labs in France. The aim of this research field is to identify and define common concepts in order to design a shared knowledge field which could be the root of education on information. The challenge is interesting because it makes specialists of the 3 fields try to find a common language with several variations and translations in terms of activities, the crossing of the viewpoints being

considered as a way to achieve a complete program for enhancing knowledge on information and use of information.

3-2 Transliteracy as a new chance to put information at the center of pedagogic reflection and practices

Transliteracy reflection emphasizes three domains in which the *professeur-documentaliste* plays a major role: media, computer and information

- Media

From the 70's, media have been studied at school as tools for teachers in the different disciplines, progressively becoming an object of study in itself, and a way of enhancing citizenship by the ability to consider and express opinions. The CLEMI, Information center for linking school and media was created in 1983 and is in charge of providing information, programs, activities and events on media at school. CLEMI organizes competitions making the pupils using the media, and the "Press week" in March, dedicated to activities with media. During the press week, schools receive magazines, newspapers and working tools for the teachers. The CDI is the natural center for this week, and many *professeurs-documentalistes* are the main organizers of the Press week, the challenge being to make their colleagues come to the CDI and work with the pedagogic material. During the rest of the year, *professeurs-documentalists* are considered as specialists of the media and build activities with the media, usually centered on citizenship. The media are supposed to be used and studied in many discipline programs. The focus on "classic" media such as press, radio and television has been replaced by the internet and social networks, which are mostly considered as dangerous in a hybrid and continuous information world.

- **Computer and digital literacy**

Apart from B2I which is quite formal and rarely used as a real education tool for computing skills, new generations of *professeurs-documentalistes* tend to take into account the real practices of the pupils in an ethical/political/economical point of view. Education on social networks and netiquette, information rights especially concerning copyright, privacy and digital identity, digital reading and writing experiences with digital pads or social networks, are some examples of activities which mix the use of computers and knowledge on information as social productions. Alexandre Serres (2010) notices that nowadays, most documents and the web 2.0 engage hybrid practices of writing and tagging, searching and organizing, which engage the understanding of the digital world as well as documentation.

- **Information**

Information remains central in the transliteracy concept. It is analyzed through social uses and practices, scientific concepts, techniques and norms and representations. All these levels have to be considered when we try to formalize education on information. Thierry de Smedt (2012) proposes a canvas in which reading, writing, navigating and organizing activities cross informational, technical and social competences which creates information literacy, digital literacy and media literacy. As an example, Alexandre Serres uses the term “digital brewing” to point out the emergence of new documents, new search tools and new practices which make the question of information evaluation central. According to him, evaluation should imply sourcing, credibility checking, quality checking, relevance checking. It also concerns a melting pot of cultures: general culture, specialized school cultures, information culture, media culture, digital and computer cultures.

Conclusion

The point is to cross the perspective of information science, computer science and research on media to understand real uses of information and make the training of young people more efficient, going further than managing the uses implied by cultural and technological industries. It implies a critical and creative point of view on the real uses but also on what is said about the uses and what is implemented in terms of education policy. It also means that the *professeurs-documentalistes* have to go further than teaching information retrieving skills or attention to the dangers of internet, toward creative writing practices which imply a personal informational experience.

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