

Dispositifs info-communicationnels: questions de médiations documentaires

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This collective work aims to contribute towards defining the notion of a device applied to documentation, situating it once again in a communication context. Viviane Couzinet, information and communication sciences teacher at Paul Sabatier University (Toulouse, France), who directed the research, explains this posture in relation to the French context, where information science and communication science coexist in the institutional and scientific planes. Here it is a case of giving the device concept its informational dimension, which is often forgotten in French research, limited to the communication dimension. The works presented were performed over the course of a seminar that began in 2003, as part of the MICS (Mediations, information, specialized communication), at LERASS (social sciences study and research laboratory), at Toulouse University.

Going back to the etymology of the word and relating it to documental activity, it is possible to complete the initial definition, contextualizing it. When considering the works by Jean Meyriat, about the exactness of meaning to be attributed to the word “information”, it is possible to associate it to “knowledge” and, especially, to “transmitted knowledge”. It is this insertion into a cognitive process that creates the link between information and communication. The device is, therefore, a mediating material object. From that point, the line joining info and communication becomes



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*sous la direction de
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deliberate by the authors, to mark the form of their approach to the phenomena they study.

All six chapters refer to the nature and functioning of the devices in the place and manner that they reach the objectives given them. The environment, whether human, economic, social, political, institutional or cultural, does indeed exert a strong influence on their functioning and also on their evolution. The revelation of visible and subjacent potentials makes it possible to understand what is expected of the technique, as the device lies within the domain of an organizational logic that belongs to the technique of the work it depends on, its norms and skills, as well as the habitus of its authors. The device is also a set of social relations, in which skill complementarity operates. Information association supposes actor interaction through techniques and material objects. It being a case of information dissemination, the observed physical objects are databases, magazines, sets of documents or organisms belonging to a specific sphere or knowledge or a certain activity.

Based on the distinction between primary info-communication device, secondary info-communication device and the hybridizing forms that exist between the two, the work concentrates on the supports that give direct access to the content and the supports that act as intermediaries between the users and the document, as well as the databases, for example. Studies performed in the contexts of teaching, science dissemination and the cultural domain, in six different themes, contribute to form the notion of “info-communication device” as the central object of document information.

The first part is dedicated to teaching devices within the domain of national education and the ministry of agriculture. In the teaching sector, first of all, Patrick Fraysse, based on the network notion, studies the info-communication device named by the SCEREN-CNDP (culture, editing, national education resource services – national center for pedagogical documentation). Thus, he is able to construct a general portrait of pedagogical documentation in France. The successes and limitations of the role of producer, mediator and prescriber of tools, documentation and resources attributed to SCEREN are then substituted in a general context of reflection about teachers’ information practices and the position given to documentalist teachers, as each French school establishment has a documentation and information center managed by a teacher specially recruited to fulfill that mission. On the agriculture ministry side, Isabelle Fabre and Cécile Gardiès, by observing the organization of documental space

and a social and technical network built on shared labor, show how info-communication devices may prove the need for actors to deepen their knowledge. Beyond the initial economic and organizational aims, harmonizing practices and creating a collective dynamic reveal the importance of the ability to question the existing system and consider the user, using scientific bases as support. Thus, deep down, in the teaching context, the device’s cognitive intention is duplicated, for it is pressured to have actors for implementation who have broken sufficiently with documental techniques to plan and take on the necessary adaptations but who are also able to understand its singular practices. The support of information and communication science knowledge seems, therefore, indispensable.

Within the scope of agricultural teaching, Isabelle Fabre and Cécile Gardiès, teachers and researchers at the Toulouse national agronomy college, point out that info-communication devices have led to the magisterial dissemination of knowledge. Initially conceived as primary devices, charged with generating a mass of documents to serve as teaching support, they have developed very quickly into secondary devices, which provide forms of information, documental mediations, which in themselves are factors and supports in the access to knowledge. They are situated, therefore, in a global cognitive environment and they have become spaces for the appearance of knowledge mediations. This movement from primary device to secondary device materialized due to the availability of specialized personnel, the structure of documental space and the organization of documental treatment into a network.

Documental space, as a knowledge organization device, is also an interface between information and the user, but it doesn’t seem to always be at the heart of professionals’ concerns, unlike what occurs with users, whose representations of it are rich, but little used as preparation for forming or apprehending the devices.

At the same time, the documental network that connects all documentation centers on a national level is a rich mesh of connections, a place of social relations, of creation of values and norms that contribute towards the sharing of a common culture for the implementation of communication codes. If each documentation center is a specific info-communication device, placing them in a national network constitutes an overlapping of devices, like the agricultural education info-communication device. The two authors believe that the device’s formation can be enriched by considering users’ representations and

opening a documental mediation that can integrate the totality of elements which make up the info-communication device in its complexity.

That is how studying the info-communication device aimed at teaching, at the national ministry of education or the agriculture ministry, allows the proposition of defining elements so as to reach an understanding that connects information and communication into a specific social, technical and human organization. The cognitive ambition announced and revealed here, while it creates a knowledge-sharing ideal, also allows the construction of a sense of new forms of collective organization.

The second part of the work is dedicated to the field of scientific research in Spain (chapter 3) and France (chapter 4). The devices are seen by Francine Zafrilla-Pavan, Viviane Couzinet and Josiane Senié-Demeurisse as means for knowledge dissemination, contributing to facilitate access to works in a given discipline and helping to bring it recognition. In the analyzed ground, the Spanish Centro de información y de documentación científica (CINDOC) and its French equivalent, the Institute for Scientific and Technical Information (INIST), the National Center for Scientific Research's (CNRS) documentation center, it can be seen that, despite sociopolitical contexts of different origins, there are similarities in the trajectory.

Basing themselves on the position attributed to information science, the authors emphasize the challenges for this discipline. Expectations diverge, while in both of the organizations observed it is the end-activity's supporting discipline. The weak consideration it receives in the French context is an obstacle for its development, while in Spain it is the professional aspects that are privileged. In this part of the work, decomposing the primary and secondary devices at the service of science and industry as an important economic challenge, it is the subjacent institutional dimension included in the notion of info-communication device that becomes evident.

The third part centers on the cultural field. Caroline Courbières chose architecture as the observation ground (chapter 5). She situates herself at the point where the public space (urbanization policy, art sector) and private space meet. The authors have different professions and depend on innumerable institutional organs. The architectural sector is a very structured field, on the professional level (architects' council), education level (national architecture schools) and research level (laboratories) and is supported by strictly governmental organs (architecture and heritage

board, for example) which limit it. These different structures are inter-related on various planes, so as to form veritable networks. The author sets out to show how architectural generation work is fundamentally linked to the information aspect, underlying the importance of increasingly complex and heterogeneous devices that facilitate actor cooperation, usually organized into networks. On the other hand, the necessary relations maintained between profession, research and education, as well as the different professional organisms connected to architecture, characterize the complex information system of art rules that govern this profession. Studying the architectural sector's informational specificity shows the economic challenges linked to the professional's documental duty.

In the art education sector, Gérard Régimbeau, professor of information and communication science at the national school of information science and libraries, draws up an inventory that gathers actions, supports, exhibitions, documentation centers, museums, galleries and association, organized in favor of sustaining and disseminating contemporary visual arts in Toulouse (chapter 6). This way, he can draw a general picture of art studies. Centering on the Fine Arts School and its document and library service leads him to discuss what is known as "general culture", currently existing in education. The author substitutes the documentalist's role in the scope of an info-communication device where documentation and pedagogy are closely linked. Thus, the pedagogic dimension reinforces the cognitive dimension of the notion of info-communication device revealed in the agricultural teaching context.

This study of the notion of devices based on information and communication sciences allows centralization on the mediation process, which aims to facilitate access to a document in a given context. The re-introduction of its informational and, therefore, cognitive function in information-documentation sciences, as Jean Meyriat has highlighted, leads to the consideration of the device notion as central to the discipline. The authors gathered in this work show that this notion is complex and cannot be limited to its technical aspects. While we can lament that the connection with the system notion has not been revealed, we can also emphasize that the research works shown here highlights the importance of the place that this notion should occupy in university education in information science and in the dissemination of research.

