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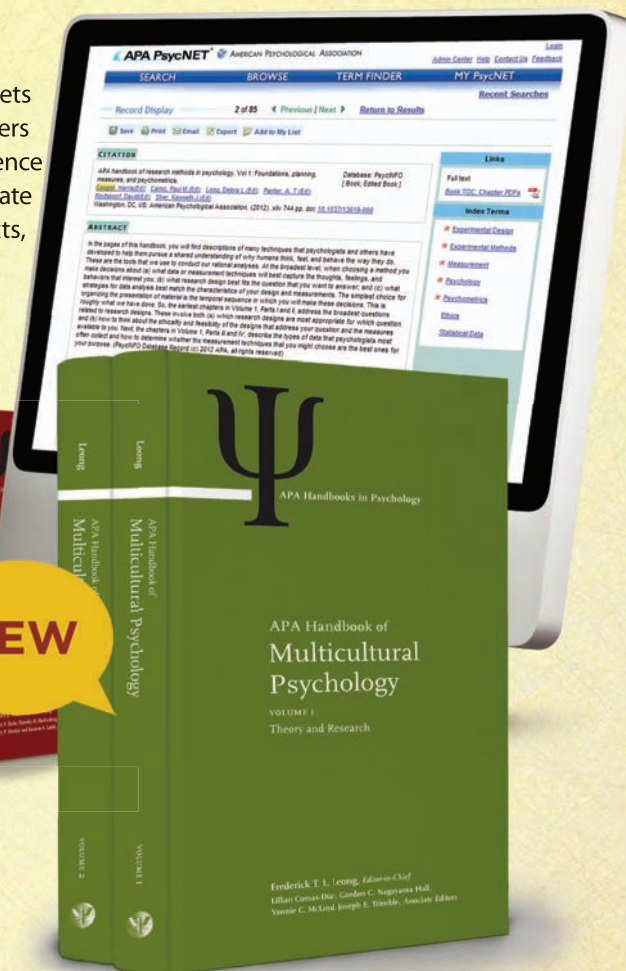
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# JOINING THE TECHNOLOGICAL DOTS

As curators of knowledge and cultural history, the burning question for us undoubtedly lies in our ongoing ability to manipulate and manage information flow. The cliché for our era is that ‘there’s an app for that’, yet this slogan belies the intricacies and complexities of human communication and the possibilities in learning and teaching environments.

Literacy and information fluency in digital environments is our contemporary challenge, and the ‘app generation’ is an expression of the power of networks, and the pertinence of technology in the knowledge interactions of learning and teaching.

Information has long been a fundamental entity in the knowledge domain work of librarians and teacher librarians, resulting in a longstanding affiliation with models of information literacy as transactional processes for effective engagement with information in helping students acquire knowledge. Domain knowledge involves understanding the resources, the community of learners and professionals, the tools and the process of creating artefacts that demonstrate an understanding of concepts and materials.

This is where various approaches to information literacy and information organisation in digital environments come into their own as mechanisms to scaffold information as a knowledge flow, nurturing the capacity for critical thinking and cognitive engagement with old and new media, including the now pervasive social media environments.

Computer and mobile device technology environments, social media, and ready forms of online communication drive our newly emerging knowledge ecosystems – and these have significantly changed in the last 10 years.

According to Tara Brabazon in her latest release *Digital Dieting*, the great gift to education of social media, like Facebook, YouTube, Flickr, Twitter and Foursquare is that they are social, forming networks of communication and connection between students and staff. We have found that through social media, distance education at Charles Sturt University is enhanced, allowing students to create much more natural relationships throughout the academic year.

To support and nurture learning in these evolving environments is a challenge, and it is why using digital mediums to communicate, collaborate, and curate in the management and dissemination of information is important. Academic and professional development programs should be designed to enhance flexibility, creativity, professional networks and personal learning conversations.

In our fast-paced world, the priority of any educator is to fast-track professional learning about, and understanding of, knowledge networks and digital innovation.

We have to recognise the vital role that library and information services play in today’s interactive knowledge environments, particularly where asking a question is synonymous with ‘googling’, and where ‘catching up with the news’ can happen in many formats via small and big devices.

Kids in schools have not known a world without technology, and the youngest students have always been in a world with hand-held and mobile devices. But as any educator or librarian knows, having a device, and communicating with a device is not the be all and end all of learning.

So the role of educators today is to extend their professional capabilities of discipline or domain expertise by embracing knowledge flow within the power of their personal and professional networks – thus developing the capacity to be agile learners themselves, ready to nurture the emergent needs of the students in their care. There is an urgency for teachers to engage with the concepts and practices needed in a digital age.

The changing character of information and the social, participatory nature of knowledge construction in connected environments have created a new participatory culture and information ecology that we cannot ignore.

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