The Future of the Book, the Book of the Future

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Abstract

Books are not merely a means of saving and transmitting information and knowledge. Books are like innumerable keys of a huge choir organ played by all of us. They depend on our intelligence, our boldness as well as on our faults. At the same time, they constitute an indirect way of communication between the author and the reader. Modern times, characterized by digital information create an actual need: the constant flow of data and the dynamic processing of a vast volume of information. How can we combine the requirements of an era that rapidly downrates all knowledge and capacities with the need to go deeper into knowledge? In what way shall we be able to combine the joy of reading on paper, with the need for constant renewal of its context? How shall we be able to make educational books a means of interactive communication between authors, educators and students? This paper aims to present the meaning of hybrid book, as the main learning tool in future education.

1. Introduction

The global explosion of the Internet [1], the massive use of powerful and very fast personal computers and the considerable upgrade of the telecommunication services and networks [2] created the circumstances for the appointment of a digital platform of communication on a planetary level. The communication between people is not dependent from the geographical distance that exists between them but from their capability to access the network [3]. The transition from the age of technology to the information age, will be marked by the widespread introduction of Information Society Applications [4] in employment, teleworking [5], in public administration, electronic government, in commerce, e– commerce, m-commerce, in enterprises, electronic business interfaces, [6,7] and in households, information superhighways etc. Information Society will be the next social and economical model towards the 21th Century [8]. Many were those who had foreseen the end of books [9] claiming that technology shall eliminate its printed version and that books only have an electronic future. On the other hand, there are many supporters of the need to preserve books in their current form. Great modern theorists and philosophers mention that “exactly as we need a printed book in order to be able to surf to the Internet, we need printed books to critically evaluate the World Wide Web [10]. The main question asked within the present paper is the following: in what way shall we be able to combine the will to preserve books in their traditional form with the need for constant renewal of its context? Is it possible that books may turn to an open communicative environment between those who shall demonstrate proper interest?

2. Hybrid book: the Concept

2.1 Definition

The term “hybrid book” refers to the best combination of use of traditional printed books and multiple potentials offered by a virtual educational environment [11]. Until today, educators make use of printed books as the main supporting means of their teaching. Depending on the learning object and the teaching method applied, educators seek additional bibliography, make use of other notes, create slights, organises projects, prepare exams etc. On the other hand, students read the contents of the books, solve the exercises contained therein and at the end of the term they are evaluated by the current examination system. Communication between educators and students with the author of educational books is indirect and performed by the printed text. Communication between educators using the same books is limited. Beyond the geographical borders of their class, students have almost no communication what – so – ever. Hybrid book aims to develop an interactive learning environment between educators, students and authors of books.
Interested parties get hybrid books that may use as printed material, in their traditional form. The innovation is that at the same interested parties may gain access - trough their personal passwords - to a specific web environment.

2.2 Characteristics
The virtual on–line environment consists of three areas. The authors’ area, the educators’ area and the area of readers – students. Each area provides specific services.

A. Educational Material Services. Creation, Storage and research of additional educational multi – media material (text, slight, image, sound, videos etc.)
- Authors’ area: authors have the opportunity to place additional educational material – in a friendly and handy environment – to suggest the use of external information resources, to renew its context regularly etc.
- Educators’ area: a) Educators have access to a significant quantity of valuable educational material, lessons slight, statistical data, exercises, teaching methods etc. B) Interaction between educators with educational material: upon official approval, educators shall have the opportunity to add material to predefined fields such as lessons, additional bibliography, research, effective practices etc.
- Readers’ – Students’ area: Students have access to the educational material teachers have access. Students shall be able to use numerous bibliographic references, texts, articles, research in order to better explore the respective fields.

B. Communication Services
- Communication between authors and educators: authors shall be able to interact with educators who wish to do so both with synchronous forms of communication (chat, MUDs) and asynchronous ones such e – mail, chat rooms etc.
- Communication between authors and students: communication is mainly based on asynchronous forms of communication.
- Communication between educators: educators – users of the virtual web environment of books may communicate in a synchronous or asynchronous manner at predefined times at the on – line book area, in order to exchange ideas, practices, resolve problems etc.

3. Conclusions
Hybrid books are an innovative proposal that may eventually prove that the best combination of printed books with the use of capacities provided in virtual learning environments not only contributes to the improvement of learning results but also creates a complete collaborative environment. For authors, hybrid books shall constitute a new area of constant interaction, creative expression and communication with people sharing the same interests. For educators, hybrid books shall be the key to gain access to a constantly renewed educational material, additional information resources, and teaching methods, in order to exchange experiences, opinions, questions both with colleagues and authors. For students, the use of such books shall provide them with access to an interactive environment with information and communication facilities, so as to probe deeper into fields they are particularly interested in.

4. References
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[10] Available at http://www.enet.gr/online/online_hprint.jsp?q=%E5%6E%A5%EF&ef=40397