

Chapter 6

The Role of Library and Information Science Professionals in the MOOC Environment in Institutions of Higher Learning

Josiline Phiri Chigwada

Bindura University of Science Education, Zimbabwe

ABSTRACT

There has been concern on how library and information professionals fit in the MOOC environment. This chapter documents the role played by LIS professionals in the MOOC environment. A literature review was done on what librarians are doing to help lecturers and students to meet their learning, teaching, and research activities in institutions of higher learning. It was noted that MOOCs provide opportunities and librarians are working with academics to assist in transition from the traditional teaching to suit the teaching requirements of a MOOC environment. Some librarians are involved in the development of MOOCs and some are taking advantage of the available MOOCs in librarianship to develop professionally. The major challenges faced are the copyright issues. The author recommends that librarians should be involved in copyright clearance, offering information literacy and alerting users on the available MOOCs, making MOOCs accessible to all users including the physically challenged. Librarians should develop a collection of open access materials that they can recommend for MOOCs.

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INTRODUCTION

Wu (2013) states that academic libraries and MOOCs seem to stand on opposite sides because libraries license digital materials for enrolled students and other members of the academic community and not for the general populace that do not have any relationship with the institution. This had caused debate on the role that is played by librarians in a MOOC environment. According to O'Brien (2013), Baturay (2015), and Kaushik (2015), librarians should care about MOOCs because they disrupt the teaching and library models that are used in teaching and learning. Hoy (2014), Stephens and Jones (2015), and Pugar and Tadasad (2016) state that librarians are influential actors in teaching and learning environments and should be concerned about the development of MOOCs. The MOOCs are externally driven and there is a rapid uptake of the courses by many users worldwide who are connected to the internet. As a result, academic librarians must be aware of the effects of MOOCs on their roles and responsibilities in institutions of higher learning. This chapter documents the role that is played by library and information science professionals in institutions of higher learning to promote MOOCs, as well as the opportunities and challenges that are faced by academic librarians in a MOOC environment.

BACKGROUND

The development of MOOCs raised the question of how and where library services fit in the MOOC model since the way they are offered is different from the normal face to face and other online courses. Becker (2013) states that MOOCs can serve thousands of students at a time without the challenges that are experienced in classroom learning in institutions of higher learning and the challenges include acceptance requirements and physical location of the institution. Therefore, institutions are now working with MOOC developers such as edX, Futurelearn, Udacity and Coursera, while some institutions are developing their own applications to deliver MOOCs such as iTunes U. Chen (2013) added that there are at least three main MOOC portals which are Coursera, edX, and Futurelearn according to Liyanagunawardena, Williams and Adams (2013). Some of these are for profit while others are non-profit making companies. Coursera was founded by Stanford university professors and it is a for-profit making company, edX was founded by Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and is a non-profit making, while Futurelearn was developed by Open Univesity in the United Kingdom. Udacity is also one of the MOOCs platforms according to Chen (2013) and this is a private organisation founded by Mike Sokolsky, David Stavens and Sebastian Thrun.

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