Academic libraries: spaces to development readers to improve their academic skills

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Abstract: The higher education institutions recognize that reading and writing is a problem among their students. The reading activities that Mexican universities undertake to help solve problems and provide alternatives to raise and improve reading skill have been identified by mapping .We used Social Mapping as the methodology to locate and display reading programmes in education, research and cultural promotion activities. We found that some academic libraries developed programs to promote academic and leisure reading. In this paper we present some research advances of different activities that offer useful information for university libraries to contributing to strengthen student's academic reading skills.

1. Introduction

Problems of reading and writing which have increased in the last decade in a considerable number of students entering institutions of higher education from different countries, have led these institutions to formulate solutions such as extracurricular courses and remedial workshops. Other institutions tend to change their teaching methods and include academic literacy; the latter being the teaching of reading, writing and oral communication that is inserted into the learning process according to the languages and academic genres of each discipline. Also, in the university libraries, programs of reading activities for pleasure and information skills are promoted. It is important to mention that by 1939, in the university library handbook of the University of Iowa, said that:

"vigorously promoted enjoyment of reading as 'the king of sports" (Trott, 2007, p. 35).

Interest in improving academic skills of universities students urged, in 2006, a group of Spanish universities to create the International Network of Universities Readers in order to "Demand that reading and writing is a basic and transvers competition; it is also a "militant form" to act as a university lecturer in the society, because we need not only good professionals but citizens with a critical, imaginative vision who can debate, discuss, disagree [...]" (http://universidadeslectoras.org/), currently 46 universities from different parts of the world have joined this International Network. One of the projects the Network is promoting, at the present time, the development of cartographies related to reading, writing and information skills in order to gather information on the aforementioned aspects for gaining visibility and promoting cooperation.

The Institute of Library Research and Information of the Autonomous National University of Mexico joined the project Cartography in 2015. At the beginning it was decided to take into consideration reading activities and information skills in universities libraries in Mexico. For this purpose, a survey of five universities libraries was undertaken. It was found, contrary to our initial presumption that different areas of these five universities where also carrying out activities related to reading and writing in education, research and cultural departments. As a result it was decided to create Cartography of reading, writing and information skills in all institutions of higher education in Mexico, calling it LEAi in Spanish acronym.

 It was consider that it was the right time to identify and collect the information about the activities, projects and the programs related to reading taking advantages of Geographic Information System (GIS) and using the methodology of participatory action and social cartography. Some of our collaborators in this project are librarians of academic libraries.

In this paper we present the design of the project and some progress that has been achieved in the area of reading and two of the maps that have been generated.

2. Reading, writing and information ability in institutions of higher education

For years the certainty was that students entering higher education level had developed sufficient skills of reading and writing to understand specialized and more complex contents, generate knowledge and communicate through discursive genres produced in each discipline. However, at present, they have shown problems in the abilities of reading and writing and subsequent effects of which are limited comprehension, limited development of academic products and improper use of information. All these affect the learning process of students.

Since the early seventies, research conducted at universities in the United Kingdom and the United States of America on the problems of writing and reading of the students and after little success of remedial programs, emerged the proposal to teach writing and reading transversely in university programs; this model was called academic literacy. The University of Wisconsin (2011) define academic literacy as the convergence of content knowledge, experiences and skills, combining all that with the ability to read, write, listen, speak, think critically and act in a way that is meaningful in the context of a field of knowledge. This model of teaching ensures students to develop the adequate skills in order to use knowledge of content and communicate it in accordance with the structure of specific genres of discipline. This requires mastering the language, terminology, concepts, discourse structure, the purposes thereof, the characteristics of genres, objectives, and production of knowledge in each subject. Currently, the hypertext genres are added, in many iconic and / or sound elements are used. All these require learning to read and write and interact with different modalities of information representation.

In recent years, some of institutions of higher education of different countries have taken the proper actions in order to raise the skills of the students, since they have identified among generations entering universities deficiency in the mother tongue which makes it difficult for them the process of comprehension and interpretation of texts, reflection and critical analysis. These skills are also essential to assess the relevance and quality of information and bibliographic and electronics sources. These skills are necessary to improve the performance of various learning activities, to develop different academic products, such as writing home works and theses. Besides; this will allow taking advantage of mobility, programs national and international graduate and keeping learning a long-life process.

3. Cartography of reading, writing and information ability, LEAi

Cartography LEAi[1] is a geographical system that gathers information about programs, projects, activities, education, research, dissemination and extension, in accordance with the maps related to reading, writing and information ability, whether they are directed to their academic communities or to different groups of society. Usually this information is reported and shared with specialty groups or among the members of the institution. Each single map of reading, writing and information ability is produced using Participatory Action Research PAR) and Social Cartography methodologies; the input information are received from participants of the project and are displayed territorially by Mexican universities.

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[1]Spanish acronym for reading, writing and information ability

4. Research Methods

Two research methods were used for this project: social cartography (SC) and participatory action research (PAR). These two methods are described briefly.
The Social Cartography is a part of human geography; it is considered a "tool aimed at identifying and analyzing social information and knowledge, and transmit them visually and in spatial for decision making. In another words, it gathers information spatially through the visual language" (Programa Regional. Juventud Rural Emprendedora, 2014). The Social Cartography can interpret social and cultural dynamic of university community in order to obtain information related to reading, writing and information ability in their territory.

A complement to Social Cartography is Participatory Action Research method that can be defined "to actively incorporate in to the research process those social subjects that fulfill the role of facilitator of information in the context of an investigation" (Arroyo and Sádaba, 2012, p. 154). This means that at the same time that the social subjects are participating in this project as facilitators of information, they can change the direction of the project as the evaluation of actions and participant are observed. The literature emphasizing the benefits of PAR method "greater clarity and precision in the knowledge of the problems, greater efficiency in carrying out actions of those involved since they have knowledge of the problem, learning more objectively and more democratically" (Alcocer, 1998, p.154).

5. Advances de la Cartography LEAi

The Cartography LEAi of reading is at the phase of collecting questionnaires completed by the participants' universities. So far the results sixteen pilot's questionnaires have been recorded. Most of the responses from a general perspective are identified and their interpretation can support the objectives outlined in the proposal. In addition, they provide information that enables the design of thematic maps supported by the application of googlemaps, which spatially represents the spatially the reality of the situation. In the annex the following maps are presented: Promotion programs currently of reading for pleasure and book fair and reading fair. (See figures in annexes)
A short glance at the information obtained from the electronic questionnaires completed by the participants of the project, one can observe the reading in all its forms stands out with 70 % followed by writing a 28 % and finally information literacy, and information skills with 2%.

Reading Quantitative data map

Reading by pleasure programes		
Place	University	Titleof theProgram
Morelos	Library ITESM (Monterrey Institute Technology of Higher Studies)	Pasión por la Lectura (Passion for Reading) Reading Promotion Program
Monterrey	General Libary Coordination UANL (Autonomous Nuevo Leon Universty)	Inducción a la cultura de la información
	Library UASLP (Autonomou San Luis Potosí University)	Institutional Program UniLee
Veracruz	General Libary Coordination UV (Veracruzana University)	Readers and Readings Portal (Portal de Lectores y Lecturas)
Baja California South	UABCS (Autonomous Baja California South University	Reading Room "Analema"
Baja California North	General Libary Coordination UBAC (Autonomous Baja California University)	Reading Program
Mexico city	Coordination of Cultural Diffusion UNAM	Universo de Letras (Univers of Lyrics)
Puebla	General Libary Coordination BUAP (Autonomous University of Puebla)	Reading Social Promotion
Tabasco	Library of Tolteca University	Reading Program

Academic Reading			
DOCENCIA	69% subjects as a part of curricula	21% extracurricular curses	10 % workshops and seminars
In the area of teaching the universities most reading curse is a subject of the curriculum of different academic programs; and less are extracurricular workshops and seminars.			

Reading Research project		
Research	37.5%	
In the research area the universities carry out projects about reading it, represents 25 %, more than writing indicating that reading is gaining attention to know reading practices and to develop solutions to improve this ability not only in university student but also different groups.		

6. Stages of Cartography LEAi
Stage I: Diagnosis
With the goal to put into perspective the subject of study and to determine the variables of Cartography, the aspects that limit the project were identified. There are: Mexican universities, university students, reading, writing and information ability. Also identified were different cartography representations, and

geographic information systems. With these, the objectives, the mythology and schedule of activities were defined.

The following table displays the information for the proposal and for the validity of analysis.

ELEMENTS OF CARTOGRAPHY LEAi	PRODUCED BENEFITS
Number of public universities distributed by State	Allows to identify the participants universities in Cartography LEAi
To identify the participant social actors	To establish the representative of each State in the Cartography LEAi
Information resources	To identify different information sources that contribute to design SIG data base

In this stage, three questionnaires were sent to five university librarians about programs, projects and activities related to reading, writing and information abilities in teaching, research and cultural diffusion. These five librarians were named as pilot group.

Stage II. Implementation of action plan
In pilot phase of Cartography LEAi, the structure of electronic questionnaires was redesigned. This change gave favorable results. Instead of three questionnaires we had now only one which was easier to interpret the data provided by participants. Moreover, we managed to extend our invitation to other institutions. At the present time there are 16 involves in the project.

According to the methodology of social cartography and obtained information from electronic questionnaires the principal maps could be elaborated. With this experience, the second step will be necessary to create focus group in order to elaborate participatory maps from visual representation of their information.

Stage III. Systematization of information
This is the final stage of the Cartography and consists in recollection of recorded information in electronic questionnaires. The information will be analyzed in order to establish relevant relation in accordance with the objectives of Cartography LEAi.
Later on, is to codify hard data and register them in a system which will represent the analyzed content. Final products are the maps that will represent the description of organized information.

The two maps presented with information related to the realization of book fairs in the various states of Mexico, are: Aguascalientes, Baja California Norte and Sur, Campeche, Chiapas, Chihuahua, Mexico City, State of Mexico, Guadalajara, Guanajuato, Merida, Monterrey, Pachuca, Oaxaca, Puebla, San Luis Potosi, Xalapa, Zacatecas.

And the second map is information of the universities that have programs and related reading promotion activities were identified in the following states: San Luis Potosi, Oaxaca, Ciudad Juarez, Guadalajara, Queretaro, Xalapa, Mexico City, Puebla, Monterrey, Baja California Norte and Sur, Tamaulipas, Tabasco.

7. Conclusion

Today, reading is one of the controversial issues of higher education domain. As can be observed, from the first phase of Cartography LEAi, there are more and more Mexican Institutions of higher education that are undertaking different actions, projects, teaching, research and cultural diffusion programs. It is important that point out that university libraries are taking actions directed to the promotion of reading among the communities as well as different sector of the society. In some of the activities of diffusion the librarians take advantages of the participation of universities students for promotion of reading.

Cartography LEAi, in the its first phase, aims to create a geographic information system about actions, projects and programs on reading in the institution of higher education in Mexico. At the same time, it seeks to promote this system among another institutions not yet undertaken this incentive with the hope to motivate them to participate in this project. We believe we should make this system visible and exchange information so that inter- institutional collaboration can be achieve a national and international level.

Cartography LEAi puts forward a mythological framework for the creation and information system in accordance with the characteristics of social cartography and participatory action research. Its design is such that will allow taking advantage of technological resources to be use for updating, integration and flexibility and accordance with peculiarities of each participant institution.

As the cartography LEAi advances, it paves the way for the creation of geographic knowledge with the library science discipline where participatory maps will be de new instrument of information. Moreover, information is of a great utility so that the university librarians join the institutions' efforts for reading promotion. This strengthens their position in academic domain if they make academic libraries spaces to development readers and their improve academic skills

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