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MOOCs: A new platform for LIS Professional Development

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Abstract

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are recent innovative addition to the online learning landscape and spreading rapidly in all disciplines including Library and Information Science (LIS) profession. MOOCs proliferates, LIS professionals have the opportunity to leverage this technology to improve their professional skills. This paper, intended to understand the MOOCs concept, MOOCs and LIS Education, MOOCs Benefits, Why LIS should be part of MOOC, and at the end discussed feasible areas of application of MOOCs in LIS domain etc.

Keywords: MOOCs; online learning; Professional development; LIS education; Internet learning

1. Introduction:

Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) is recent popular trend in the online learning landscape. In this online learning environment Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are generating considerable excitement in the world of higher education. MOOCs are designed for large numbers of participants can be accessed by anyone anywhere as long as they have an internet connection, are open to everyone without entry qualifications, and offer a full/complete course experience online for free¹. This revolutionary step towards providing versatile education has yielded some impressive results in the globe. It is a chance for millions of people whoever they are, to follow courses led by distinguished scholars and the same time connects with a community of likeminded fellow learners around the globe².

The Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) stood poised to overturn the old model of higher education predominantly in developed countries Like USA and UK. Their interactive technology promised to deliver top-tier teaching from institutions like Harvard, Stanford, and MIT, not just to a few hundred students in a lecture hall on ivy-draped campuses, but free via the Internet to thousands or even millions around the world. Some wondered whether MOOCs would merely transform the existing system or blow it up entirely. According to Thrun Sebastian a computer scientist, predicted that in 50 years, 10 institutions would be responsible for delivering higher education³.

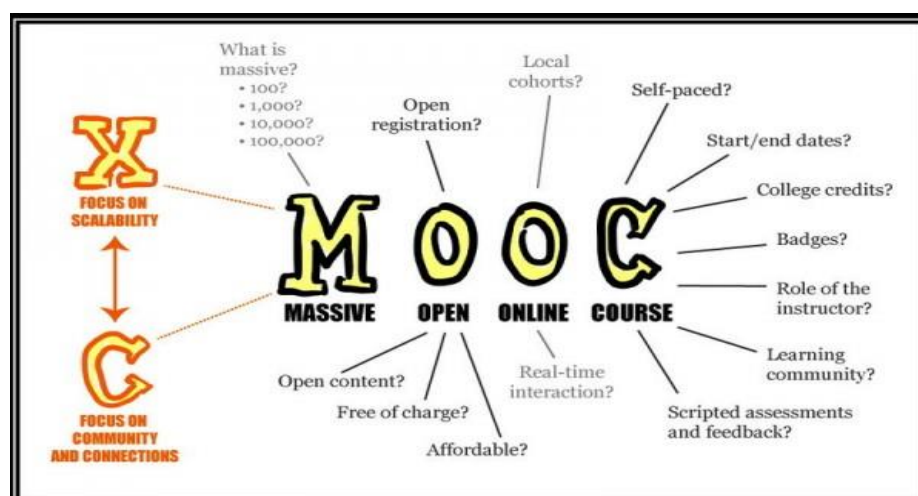


Fig-1 Dimension of MOOCs Concept⁴

MOOCs are very recent origin in distance learning environment, started somewhere around mid of 2011 and established a new paradigm in online learning in every discipline including library and information science. This technology offers spaces for professionals to work not only according to their library and information science practices but also provide space to assist in other professionals who are engaged in MOOC creation and development at large level.^{5&6}

2. MOOCs Characteristics:

1. Openness (Anybody, Anytime, Anywhere and Any number)
2. Online Mode of Delivery (Audio-Visual & Multimedia)
3. Online Quizzes and Assessment
4. Short Videos and Quizzes
5. Peer and Self-Assessment Thought Tests and Quizzes and
6. Online Discussion Forums for Clearing the Doubts⁷

3. MOOCs and LIS Education

Globally, the new concept of E- learning through MOOCs is set to redefine the concept of higher education. These developments in education will change the learning orientation of students, faculty, institute and library. Similarly, this new environments of participatory and transformative learning offer the potential for LIS professionals to test emerging technologies, experiment and play with new roles, and self-select teams for collaborative artifact creation the author has adapted his existing online graduate course, called the Hyperlinked Library, at San Jose State University's School of Library and Information Science (MOOCs on Library & Information Science) in order to explore how LIS professionals can use emerging technologies and participatory practices to serve their communities. Through the MOOCs platform, LIS professionals and students can play the roles of learner, connector, and collaborator in a self-directed yet social learning experience. Results from the pilot course will contribute to a better understanding of how the not-for-credit MOOC can serve as a transformative environment for professional development^{8&9}.

4. Why LIS Should Part of MOOCs?

There are several reasons as to why LIS should consider being part of MOOC model. The following reasons are:

- 1) Most of the courses are absolutely free. Simply create a user account, find a course that interests you, and dive in. Gain exposure to course content that would usually cost thousands of dollars in enrollment fees,
- 2) the lecture videos are also mostly very short that gets straight to the point and learners have the power to pause, play, rewind in case if they miss out any valuable information which they cannot do in normal lectures.
- 3) In fact, the learning process can also be combined with one's studies or jobs because learning via MOOC is very easy as the user is the one who controls the pace of his or her learning.
- 4) Learning with MOOC saves time and definitely saves money.
- 5) The courses offered by MOOCs are mostly accessible via gadgets such as computers, mobile phones, tabs and others and this makes the learning experience much more fun as learners can learn anytime and anywhere as it does not require them to be at a specific place to learn¹⁰.

5. MOOCs Benefits for LIS Education

The following of the benefit can be extracted by using the MOOCs.

- 1) Help in learning from experts in the field
- 2) Efficacy of online learning
- 3) Retrieval learning (Downloadable materials)
- 4) Help in bringing diversity
- 5) Enhanced learning through this assessment
- 6) Enhanced attention and focus

- 7) Peer assistance, outofoband learning
- 8) Enhance the education and research in LIS

6. MOOCs on Library and Information Science Domain:

There are various MOOCs were developed in the area of library and information science domain in which few important MOOCs mentioned below:-

Sl.No	MOOC Offering Organizations	Web URL
1	The Hyperlinked Library San José State University for Library and Information Science professionals	https://ischool.sjsu.edu/programs/moocs/hyperlinked-library-mooc
2	OCLC	http://www.oclc.org/research/events/2013/03-18.html
3	The British Library and University of Nottingham UK	http://www.bl.uk/press-releases/2015/february/propaganda-mooc
4	New Librarianship iSchool, Syracuse University	http://ischool.syr.edu/landing-pages/admissions/new-librarianship-open-online-course
5	PSU Library Penn State University library supports	https://www.libraries.psu.edu/psul/researchguides/MOOC.html
6	Metadata Jeffrey Pomerantz from North Carolina University	https://www.mooc-list.com/course/metadata-organizing-and-discovering-information-coursera?static=true
7	Library Advocacy Unshushed: Values, Evidence, Action University of Toronto	https://www.edx.org/course/library-advocacy-unshushed-university-torontox-la101x
8	ACRL ALA:The Library Support for Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) Discussion Group	http://www.ala.org/acrl/aboutacrl/directoryofleadership/discussiongroups/acr-dgmoocs
9	Libraries and MOOCs The Association for Library Collections and Technical Services ALCTS	http://www.ala.org/alctsnews/items/moocs
10	INDIANAPOLIS DLISC at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis	http://news.iupui.edu/releases/2015/04/mooc-library-and-information-science.shtml

Table-1 MOOCs on LIS domain

7. Areas of Application of MOOCs in LIS Profession

The LIS profession will be required to reorient itself in that setting to meet the emerging new demands of students, faculty and researchers. In this context, LIS Professionals need to be skilful at enabling and fostering change. MOOCs may help in improving the quality of LIS Education. Some of the areas of application of MOOCs in LIS Profession are as follows.

7.1. Theory of Library and Information Science: The practical application of library and information science is based upon 75 years of critical theory and thought. MOOCs give an opportunity for LIS schools to collaborate in developing latest theories in LIS profession. So that gives an opportunity for students to learn new critical theories from best teachers irrespective of geographical location. Also gives insights into how such theory can be incorporated into actual LIS research and practice.¹¹

7.2. ICT Applications for Libraries: New user demands will impose LIS professionals to adopt a higher degree of ICT tools. In this context, LIS Professionals need to be skilful at enabling and fostering change. Adopting and harnessing ICT become essential. Maintaining relevance and monitoring trends in technology will play the major role in this context. It is imperative for LIS professionals to keep themselves updated and prepared to face the challenges posed by advances in ICTs and opportunities offered by online learning.

7.3. Practices in LIS: opportunities librarians have for gaining hands-on experience with particular technologies that can help improve their reference and instructional services delivery. There is a broad range of course offerings in areas of computer science for librarians with an interest in developing technological expertise. There are also several business and management courses that may satiate the need for librarians in managerial positions who desire a more theoretical approach to human resources management, organizational behavior, or strategic thinking.

7.4 Continuing of Education: MOOCs provide great opportunities for LIS students and teachers to supplement their educations. For students, MLIS provides a strong basis for a career in libraries, but there is a limit to how much professors can teach in a two-year program and will get a chance to learn additional tech skills before graduation for current student. MOOCs apart from helping students would also help in the continuing education of working teachers and librarians. It supports the professionals to continue education for their promotion and enhancing the knowledge and get a hold on the areas in weak¹².

7.5. English Communication/General Learning: MOOCs provide a good platform for working teachers and librarians to learn English communication and general things of the society. To survey in the working organization English communication and general things are inevitable. Because learning of English communication and general things of the society leads to understand others views and expressing your own views in a clear and concise manner is a crucial skill that needs to be developed.

7.6. Students Centric Learning: Teachers can also assign students to join different Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and that they are to complete those courses together in a specific amount of time. The objective of this is to later on share their different knowledge with each other and gain from each other. They can also share their final projects with one another and create a discussion out of the activity. This will not only create independent learners, but it will also create students with high creative and critical thinking skills¹³.

7.7. Helps in Training and Motivation: Education and training are two sides of the coin of professional development in any field. In fact, in order to train the working library professionals, various training programmes were initially developed and then expanded and converted into degree courses. The growth of formal education in LIS is an outcome of the need of training for working librarians¹⁴.

7.8. Best Tool for Board of Studies: MOOCs are the source kit of knowledge. LIS professional experts go thought various MOOCs scattered in the globe and read the content structure of them. This has become a good tool for the BOS members of the face to face education institutes to incorporate those contents and formulate the syllabuses.

8. Conclusion:

Massive Open Online Course is offering vast opportunities as well as challenges before library and information science professionals in which they can explore possibilities to use Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) technology in most effective way. It is very difficult for any library school to provide a kind of education and training on all segments of modern librarianship, it is true especially in the developing countries. Library schools in these countries face certain challenges such as shortage of teachers, funds, skill levels, availability of resources and infrastructure. In spite of their disruptive nature, it is true that MOOCs will bring in an opportunity for librarianship in improving the LIS education and skills of library professionals. In case it is not possible for LIS schools to accept these in totality, at least, they may be used to create a flipped classroom, where teachers can show their teaching through video lectures and blended classroom cultures adopting quality video lectures from MOOCs.

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