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## **The Concept of a Person's Information Culture: View from Russia**

La conception de la culture informationnelle chez l'individu: le point de vue de la Russie

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### **Résumé en français :**

Cet article détaille les spécificités de l'approche russe à l'analyse de l'éducation à l'information et à la société de l'information. Dans une première partie l'auteur propose un bilan des publications scientifiques russes dans le domaine de la culture de l'information, ainsi qu'une analyse de la genèse et de l'évolution du concept. A partir du constat de la polysémie du terme 'culture de l'information', dont le sens varie selon les disciplines scientifiques, l'auteur présente les approches contemporaines russes au problème de sa définition et de son interprétation. L'auteur en conclut que le concept de 'culture de l'information' renvoie à une approche scientifique multidisciplinaire dont témoignent de nombreuses publications théoriques, mais qu'en même temps il faut comprendre la 'culture de l'information' comme une sphère d'activité, dans laquelle les enseignants et les bibliothécaires jouent le rôle principal. De nombreuses publications ont en effet été consacrées à l'expérience des établissements scolaires et universitaires et des bibliothèques dans le développement de la culture informationnelle de l'individu en Russie.

Dans une deuxième partie, l'auteur présente sa propre conception et définition de 'culture informationnelle', et propose des principes méthodologiques et des conditions d'organisation de l'éducation à l'information pour le citoyen, ainsi que le modèle d'un cours intitulé « Les principes de la culture informationnelle chez l'individu ». En traçant la distinction entre la 'littéracie informationnelle' et la 'culture informationnelle' l'auteur montre l'importance de la formation à l'information, notamment pour éviter le divorce entre la culture 'humaniste' et la nouvelle culture technocratique. Une approche différenciée à la formation à l'information est mise en avant, à travers l'exemple de l'adaptation du cours à des publics variés.

Dans la troisième partie l'auteur fait le bilan de 20 ans d'expérience dans l'application de ces principes et du cours à l'activité de différents établissements et bibliothèques, au niveau national, en Russie, ainsi qu'au niveau international, y compris à travers sa participation au programme « Information pour tous » de l'UNESCO et son travail au sein du « comité sur la littéracie informationnelle » de l'IFLA.

**Information culture (IC): the concept's genesis and evolution in Russian scientific literature.** Information training has deep historical roots in Russia: rich traditions and experience of schools, colleges, universities and libraries on citizens' information training are accumulated. International experience, ideas of UNESCO and IFLA on training information literacy (IL) are recognized, well-known to Russians and approved. At the same time the idea of a person's IC formation in Russia was developed.

The term «IC» in the Russian publications appeared for the first time in the 1970's. Initiators of public attention to this phenomenon were bibliographers and librarians. They began to work actively as a part of the International academy of information, published a series of collections «Problems of IC», and also held some international scientific conferences devoted to humanitarian problems of information, including problems of IC, on the base of the Krasnodar State University of Culture and Arts (12; 13; 16). Later, other higher educational institutions of culture and arts joined this activity: Moscow and Kemerovo State Universities of Culture and Arts, and Samara State Academy of Culture and Arts.

This activity resulted in advocating of some ideas about IC in areas connected with information functioning in society and a person's information qualities formation. The scientific community realized the global role of information in society's evolution and a person's livability. Since the end of the 1980's along with bibliographers and librarians, social scientists and philosophers became interested in IC's problems.

Later this concept got the categorical status and was used in a specially-scientific and philosophical context in publications of philosophers such as A.A.Vinogradov and L.V. Skvortsov (2), E. P.Semenyuka (18), A.D.Ursul (19). They consider the IC as the major component of spiritual culture of society, various social groups and individuals.

V.A.Fokeev in his article (20) giving the analysis of IC's problems emphasized that it got attraction of many sciences' scholars presenting semiotics, linguistics, sociology, psychology, pedagogics, anthropology (culturology), aesthetics as well as information theory, cybernetics, computer science, documentary science, etc.

N.B.Zinoveva (9) attempted the ordering of existing ideas about the theory of a person's IC.

In the 1990's the necessity of judgment and generalization led to the IC's theory based on accumulated knowledge as a new scientific discipline what was shown in works by professor M.G.Vokhrysheva (3).

The increasing interest to IC's problems among teachers became the appreciable tendency of the last decade. The defended dissertations studied various aspects of IC's formation of secondary school learners: age characteristics, subjects' specifics, computer and ICT roles.

Along with them there appeared many dissertations devoted to a special character of IC's formation of students and postgraduates. Generalization of researches is given in A.T.Asherov and T.L.Bogdanova's monography (1).

One more direction is represented in pedagogical dissertations devoted to teachers' IC's formation. The theory, practice and their analysis are given in E.V.Danilchuk's monography (7).

Since the second half of the 1990's various definitions of the concept «IC» were included into reference media: «The Explanatory dictionary on information work bases», 1995; the encyclopaedia «Cultural science. The XX-th century»; «The Directory of a librarian», 2000; «The Pedagogical dictionary», 2000; «The Short directory of a school librarian», 2001. Now the definition of this term is given also in the dictionary «The Internet basic concepts and definitions». (<http://www.rol.ru/files/dict/internet/index.htm>)

The acquired theoretical knowledge opened the possibility for forming of a new integrative discipline «Principles of a person's IC» which was put into practice in a number of higher educational institutions including Moscow State University after M.V.Lomonosov and State University « Higher School of Computer Science » (6), higher educational institutions of culture and arts: Moscow (10), Krasnodar (9), Kemerovo (4;5), Samara (14).

In general the phenomenon of IC of a person was reflected in a considerable number of publications in Russia. The bibliographic index «IC of a person» contains data on 853 works published in Russia from 1973 to 2006 (11). It reflects standard legal documents, monographies, dissertations, articles and theses, and also helps, educational and instructing methodical editions on IC's problems.

Interdisciplinary character of IC's problems generated a variety of theoretical concepts describing this phenomenon. The works devoted to it are rather diverse; they differ by used conceptual device, research methods, and scientific traditions. Now attempts to give definition to this concept are undertaken by using various methodological approaches: informational, culturological, philosophical, semiotic, psychological and pedagogical, paradigmatic, etc.

The analysis of existing definitions of the IC's concept allows to confirm the following:

1. Now IC is treated as a special phenomenon of information society. Depending on an object of consideration: society, separate categories of information users (children, teenagers, youth); separate professional categories: doctors, teachers, lawyers, etc., a person – different directions are worked out.
2. The concept «IC» has no settled volume, its borders are washed away, and the structure of its components is not exact. Definitions of this concept are built

through correlation with various higher concepts; therefore, IC is treated either as a part of universal culture, or as a version of educational or information work, or as the code correcting behaviour of a person in information society. The consequence of it is a practical incomparability of used concepts.

3. The concept content of IC essentially varied during its development. Thus, an important role played the evolution of information training objects. In a very short term these objects were transformed from rules of documents' search in library catalogues to information search strategy on the Internet. Expansion of information training objects' nomenclature had a consequential attraction of concepts and terms from different areas of knowledge (librarianship, computer science, documentary science, programming, etc.) for the concept characteristic of IC.

4. The reason of term's IC's polysemy is one of the main elements making it - information and culture - but IC is not a simple sum of these two components. It represents a qualitatively new phenomenon.

Even the fluent historical view to formation and concept development of IC confirms the steady interest to IC problems of both profiles' scientific representatives: humanitarian and technical ones.

On the one hand, it promoted the accelerated development of scientific views on the of IC phenomenon: its complexity, multidimensionality, and ambiguity.

On the other hand different sciences' representatives participating in the IC's theory development use their own objects, methods and it generates mono-disciplinary approaches inadequate to the complex IC's phenomenon and this prevents mutual understanding. E.g., manual published for general educational institutions under the title «Information culture» stated only computer literacy bases (8;15;17).

I am convinced that bridging the gap of a fragmentation, separation of knowledge in a person's work with information presented both in traditional, and electronic form, finding integrity and completeness of ideas about effective ways of information problems' solving is possible only with development of new systematic approach to IC's formation. This belief is based on data of more than twenty years' research on IC's problems and as a result the concept of a person's IC formation is developed.

Development of this concept is carried out by teachers of Kemerovo State University of Culture and Arts, in which structure R & D Institute of Information Technologies in Social Sphere is incorporated, and which works on the Program of UNESCO «Information for All», co-operates with IFLA, takes part in carrying out international researches (21-22). The concept of a

person's IC formation developed at this institute, the full statement and description of the experience are given in the monograph (5). The concept description is the following:

**Information culture of a person: concept definition.** A person's IC is one of the components of a person's general culture; sum total of information outlook and a system of knowledge and skills providing goal aimed at independent activity in optimal satisfaction of information needs on the base of both: traditional and new information technologies. It is the most important factor of successful professional activity as well as social safety in information society.

A special place takes information outlook in the interpretation of the concept "IC". Information outlook is a system of a person's views on the information world and man's place in it. Information outlook includes beliefs, ideas, and principles of cognition and activity. This system is expressed in the values of a person's life, social group and society as a whole in the Information Age. Information outlook is closely connected with the motivation of a person's activity which determines information training's success.

Training to principles of IC is directed to a person's ability to design new information products creatively using them for various purposes.

**Information literacy and information culture of a person: similarity and difference.** The concept of a person's IC is closely connected with the concept of IL. The term «IL» not only is widely used in the English-speaking countries, but also has received the international status as a result of the vigorous activity of UNESCO and IFLA. In «Guidelines on IL for Lifelong Learning», prepared by IFLA's IL Section the developed definition of the concept «IL» is given.

Comparison of volume and content of concepts «IL» and «IC» testifies their considerable similarity. Both concepts characterise a complex, multilevel and multidimensional phenomenon of interaction between a person and information. As a part of volume of both concepts many components are allocated: from ability to conduct information search, analyze and critically estimate the found sources to their creative independent use with a purpose of diverse problems' solving arising in educational, professional, leisure or other activity.

At the same time, concept «person's IC» is wider than concept "IL". Unlike IL, it includes in its structure such components as information outlook and ability of a person to design new information products and creatively use them for various purposes. The approach allows to include information training of a person for a culture sphere. It gives the chance to provide synthesis and integrity for traditional bookish and new digital cultures, to avoid a confrontation between two polar cultures in information society: technocratic and humanitarian.

If IL is reached by training to research and information's use, its protection, skills of dialogue by means and methods of ICT, the IC is, over everything, understanding the internal

information mechanisms administrating a person's behaviour and information society development.

Realising wide prevalence of the term «IL» in international practice, we will pay attention to some vulnerability of the term «IL» and restrictions of its use in the Russian-speaking environment, caused by reasons of psycho-linguistic character.

The matter is that in Russian the word the "literacy", meaning ability to read and write, is connected only with the most simple, initial educational level. Thereby, the shade of simplicity, primitiveness is given to a complex phenomenon of a person and information interaction. Besides, in the concept's content of IL orientation to a person providing clear comprehension of that is not obviously expressed, for what is information knowledge and skills and how it is possible and necessary for it to be disposed. Lack of this motivational, information outlook component, no less than absence of trainees' aspiration and ability to operate and put the acquired information knowledge and skills in practice have rather negative consequences. In particular, in practice information incompetence frequently is not realised as a value for its overcoming for successful study, professional career; self-education is not realised also; there is no ability to create independently and take knowledge from the obtained information, i.e. to use not only ready knowledge, but also "half-finished product" of what the information frequently is.

#### **General methodical principles and conditions of information training organisation.**

The important role in the concept of a person's IC formation developed by us is taken by general methodical principles of information education organisation: culturological, systematic, active, technological, integrative, lifelong.

#### **A person's IC is a specially organized process and suggests fulfilling the following conditions:**

- introduction of a special educational course "Principles of a person's IC" into curricula of all types of educational institutions as mandatory.

- availability of a complex of teaching and learning manuals, curricular guidelines, etc. for a special discipline "Principles of a person's IC".

- use of the distributed information-educational environment including information resources, the computer techniques, access to remote domestic and world information resources.

- organisation of special professional training instructors, capable to teach the course «Principles of a person's IC» to various categories of trainees on a professional base. To solve the given problem is possible using the professional potential of teachers and librarians.

- elaboration of national standards of a person's IC for various educational levels interfaced to the international standards on information literacy.

**Model and distinctive lines of training course « Principles of person's IC».** Within the limits of the put forward concept, the model is developed and the course content of «Principles of person's IC» is defined. The generalised model of a course of « Principles of person's IC» includes the following sections reflecting the content of information training:

Section I «Information society and IC» aims at motivation formation for studying the course, development of modern person's information outlook.

Section II «Information resources of society» gives an idea about variety of modern information sources, both: traditional and electronic.

Section III «The basic types of information retrieval problems and algorithms of their decision» characterises methods and ways of effective information search in the traditional and electronic environment.

Section IV «Analytic-synthetic processing of information sources» gives representation about rational methods of information transforming, ways of its estimation and interpretation.

Section V «Technologies of information products' making» answers a question how to prepare independently a quality information product from «information raw materials».

These sections are mandatory and make an invariant part of the course. The variant part depends on a category of trainees and considers age, character of activity (study, work), a profile and preparation level, branch specialisation, level of IC, information requirements and other factors. It is shown both in selection of training content and in selection of the publications included in lists of literature recommended.

The given model allowed to create the whole complex of curricula. It includes programs for 1-11th grades of secondary school learners, students of pedagogical colleges, students and post-graduates of universities, teachers. Full texts of these programs in Russian are in the book (5), on a site (<http://nii.kemguki.ru>), and also on the site (<http://www.mediagram.ru>).

**The results of practical realisation of the conception of a person's IC formation.** At schools, colleges, universities, libraries of some cities and regions of Russia the course «Principles of person's IC» is introduced and curricula, methodical help materials, tests and literature lists are created for this purpose .

In Kemerovo region training of teachers and the librarians is organized and directed on mastering the technology of a person's IC formation. The regional system of improvement of teachers and librarians' professional skills in this sphere is created;

On the base of our R & D institute it was held over 20 conferences devoted to problems of preparation of a person to live in information society, published over 150 scientific works, and more than 20 learning-methodical materials on problems of person's IC. The full list of



publications, reflecting results of scientific researches of the Institute on problems of a person's IC formation is given on the site (<http://nii.kemguki.ru>)

The developed concept of a person's IC formation is not considered by authors as a dogma. The organisation of information training of a person assumes permanent development and the perfection based on results of scientific researches constantly administrating "feedback" with educational institutions and libraries.

**Conclusion.** The carried out analysis testifies that in Russia the rich theoretical-methodical and skilled-experimental material on the problem of a person's IC's formation is being accumulated, there are scientific schools, there is a wide experience of educational and library establishments' work on citizens' information training. So, Russian approaches to information training are quite compatible to the international ones. Distinctions between the concept of a person's IC's formation developed in Russia and the international concept of IL do not carry principle character, they only reflect aspiration of the Russian scientists and experts to combine achievements of the international theory and practice with Russian traditions of national culture and education, accumulated experience of Russian libraries and education establishments.

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