

Definition of Fake News

Fake news (From now on FN) is defined in different ways, including misinformation that tries to state it is real news to try to influence a certain groups belief e.g. Trump supporters or sometimes used to delegitimize news that people disagree with (Lor, 2018; Kalpokas, 2019; Ball, 2018; Sumpter, 2018; Kakutani, 2018; Pollicy, 2020; Dewey Decibel, 2017). However, the most agreed upon definition is that FN are fake news stories trying to showcase they are legitimate in order to deceive a certain audience by appealing to their emotions and bias. This is the way it will be defined for this essay. Misinformation will be used in this essay to refer to misinformation on a more general level beyond just FN.

FN is a complicated concept due to it playing into psychological concepts that play on people's emotional state such as confirmation bias (Sullivan, 2018; Cooke, 2017; McDermott, 2019). This concept is usually what libraries take as the main issue psychologically and believe providing diverse information and showing people how to stop being affected by this is enough to counter it.

Sullivan (2018) believes it is too superficial, as it is an unconscious bias and it is ingrained in people's psyche; therefore, it is difficult to stop without getting into changing attitudes of patrons towards FN on a higher emotional level. However, there are other aspects such as the backfire effect (Sullivan, 2018; Lor, 2018). There is also the fact that people don't trust authorities such as academics anymore. As they are believed to be in the pocket of third parties including big business, thus what they produce is not seen as legitimate and therefore all sources are seen to have the same authority (Blume, 2018; Sullivan, 2018; Lor, 2018).

Thus they believe without evidence what they personally agree with, which aids FN. Meaning it's a very complicated concept psychologically as it plays heavily into the affective aspect of misinformation consumption.

The Professional Issue

The professional issue being studied is how libraries have responded to fake news and what can be improved. Fake news is a major issue which has been prevalent since the 2016 US election. Libraries have responded vigorously, believing FN is part of our duty to fight misinformation and create an informed populace. It has mainly consisted of providing source evaluation classes and promoting their collection of diverse quality information and promoting these services to patrons (SXSW EDU, 2018; Dewey Decibel, 2017). This essay is looking at this response and asking is it effective? If not, what can be improved according to the literature.

The most common response is to simply promote what we have always done i.e. how we provide quality diverse information to decrease bias and teach source evaluation through

Information Literacy (From now on IL) and encourage all other libraries to do these services. The IL training involves using e.g. the CRAAP (Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, Purpose) test (Thiessen et al, 2019) which checks a source by using these questions in a checklist and the Association of Research and College Libraries (ACRL) framework that acts as a set of guides for designing IL classes through six prescribed frames (Copenhaver, 2018; ALA, 2017; IFLA, 2018).

For instance the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (2018, p. 2) advocates for its members to continue teaching IL classes and provide quality diverse information. Similarly, the American Library Association (ALA, 2017, np). believes our traditional services are more important than ever due to their key role in fighting misinformation. The ALA believes libraries play a key role by providing quality information to stop the spread of bad information and in teaching people how to search for information and evaluate it. They believe that libraries just need to promote these traditional services.

However, there is a critique of this response, that believes just promoting these services is not enough as they are not that useful against the complicated aspects of FN (Johnson, 2017; Thompson, 2018; Blueme, 2018; Pollicy, 2020). For instance Blueme (2018, p.270) makes the point that the ACRL framework portrays academic sources as the gold standard of information sources, without recognising the mental resistance to them. Making it less effective than is believed, as people resist the quality sources that the framework is trying to push them towards. This is due to cognitive authority, a psychological concept that means that sources, whatever their validity, that agrees with the patron's viewpoint is granted authority academics previously had. She believes we must instead focus on researching these emotional affective aspects of FN fully and create a full plan to counteract them. The belief that providing information is enough is also critiqued (Lor, 2018; Sullivan, 2018). As it is believed that people are unlikely to read information if they disagree with it, meaning that simply providing quality, diverse information is not effective meaning other aspects should be focused on.

This is the professional issue being studied, what has been our response to FN and what has been advocated by the library community, and how can it be improved. It is believed that libraries have a major role to play against FN (Lor, 2018). To showcase this and put it into context, we need to see how big an issue FN is and why it is believed libraries play such a big role.

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