THE CONTRIBUTION OF THEORY AND RESEARCH TO THE TRANSFORMATION OF LIBRARIES

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Impact of Information Disorders in Librarians' Community

Objective. Librarians' role is crucial in combating information disorders. Their ability to identify false information is a core professional competency. As librarians refine their professional identities, they also cultivate a robust knowledge practice. This paper delves into the impact of information disorders on the librarian community. **Methods.** A group of Filipino public librarians were interviewed to understand the librarians' perceptions of the severity and impact of information disorders on their communities. **Results.** After careful analysis of qualitative data, five themes emerged including credibility threat, detrimental information, unfounded claims, manipulation of information, and promotion of truthful information. **Conclusions.** Information disorders pose a serious threat to librarians and the public. Malicious actors exploit these to manipulate public opinion, leading to fraud and false expertise. Librarians can counter these threats by sharing credible resources. They can also address the crisis of credibility by sharing expert advice and advocating for the value of accurate information

Keywords: information disorders; public librarians; social media information; role of librarians

Introduction

Libraries are recognizing the importance of social media as a tool for connecting with their users, especially younger generations who are more likely to engage with online platforms. Social media platforms have made it easier for individuals to publish and share information, creating risks of accessing fraudulent information. This became a serious challenge for librarians on how to properly navigate legitimate sources circulating on social media.

In the early days of social media, librarians encountered difficulties in understanding the concepts of news sharing and social media (Kümpel, Karnowski, & Keyling, 2015). As time passed by in an online environment, false and fake information became rampant in social media. One huge challenge is to identify the accuracy and credibility of information. This study examines the emerging issue of information disorders on social media and its impact on the librarian community.

Statement of the Problem and Objectives of the Study. The status of librarians in society matters thus, their expertise in identifying fake news circulating on social media is part of their professional identity. If we talk about civic librarianship as a professional identity, it attempts to substantiate the notion of being "accountable to society" (Pedersen, 2006). Librarians' commitment to ensuring information credibility is a key aspect of their authority. However, their expertise in evaluating information also makes them susceptible to the risks associated with online false information. The main question asked in this study is to understand the impact of information disorders on the community of Filipino public librarians.

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Review of Related Literature. Libraries can use their influence to help students and librarians spot misinformation and caution others against spreading it. They can strengthen public awareness campaign to address information disorders (Yap & Tafalla, 2021). Libraries are key players in combating false information (Coward, McClay, & Garrido, 2018). As anyone can publish online, the libraries can also do their part by bridging the gap of providing truthful information. Libraries can definitely play this role in spreading fact-based information to counter those who are disseminating biased and unverified information.

Public librarians share knowledge with their communities and are legally appointed as social authorities. This is the job that restores civic participation. However, McCabe (2001) thinks that librarians lack confidence in exercising this function. McCabe emphasizes the need for a shift towards a more confident leadership style. Their social authority position grants them the responsibility to share knowledge and advocate for the library's role in education and community development. Librarians play a vital role in educating the public about information access and retrieval, as well as teaching them how to evaluate information. These knowledge practices are essential for defining and reinforcing their professional identity. The confidence they exude reinforces public trust in their abilities. As Hicks (2014) and Wilson (1983) emphasize, this trust forms the foundation of civic librarianship.

Bringle and Wall (2020) noticed that civic skills can be composed of civic professionalism, social responsibility, and participatory democracy as meanings that elicit civic education that is all related to scholarship, practice, and research. The civic role of librarians encompasses intellectual freedom, and their role is to exercise their social authority (McCabe, 2001).

Spreading false information, even unintentionally, can have a detrimental impact on both the information itself and the credibility of the sharer. Inaccurate information, regardless of intent, can lead to real-world harm. In a study by Lees (2018), the accusation of news media outlets of emitting false information is becoming a norm thus librarians have this challenge to protect the information coming from legitimate sources.

Librarians face an additional hurdle – the pre-existing biases and behaviors of social media users. Social media environments can influence information processing and decision-making. Confirmation bias (Westerwick, Johnson, & Knobloch-Westerwick, 2017) leads users to favor information that aligns with their existing beliefs, disregarding contradictory evidence.

Simultaneously, the proliferation of manipulated images and deep fakes on social media poses a significant challenge. These synthetic media are increasingly employed to destabilize governments and spread misinformation. One way for librarians to counter false information is to develop techniques to identify information disorders and policies for deterring its spread. Cultivating critical evaluation abilities at a young age is essential for navigating the complexities of information from books, websites, and authoritative figures.

Social media is a dynamic space where information is not merely created and absorbed but actively exchanged and interpreted. New meanings emerge through this interactive process. Given the numerous challenges faced by librarians and information professionals, Anderson (2018) emphasized the importance of understanding how information spreads and educating the public about information misinformation. While this is a daunting responsibility, it is a crucial role that librarians must embrace in the fight against fake news.

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Methods

This study describes the novel phenomenon of information disorders circulating in social media as experienced by Filipino librarians and how it impacts their profession. Responses are organized by themes and followed by a discussion of analysing the content of the interview.

Discourse analysis allows the discovery of librarians' civic duties and how it is related to their professional identity. The messages conveyed during the interview will understand the extent of the civic roles of librarians in terms of acknowledging information disorders and their harmful threat in social media.

Purposive sampling was used to identify the participants of the study. With the current list of librarians who received an award from the National Library of the Philippines. These librarians were chosen as they see fit and appropriate as they are seen as role models in the profession. The sampling size is dependent on the number of librarians who received an award. Mason (2010) said that the initial sample size can be 20 but with the current situation, it is impossible to attain due to factors such as the librarian's departure because of retirement and unavailability of the participant to join an online interview. Data are collected and stored online through an online platform system with the permission of the participant. The interview was recorded subject to the participants' agreement. Data was analysed using NVivo 14 (1.7.1), a qualitative data analysis (QDA) computer software package.

Results and Discussion

A total of twelve participants agreed to be interviewed online for a period of eight months (Figure 1).
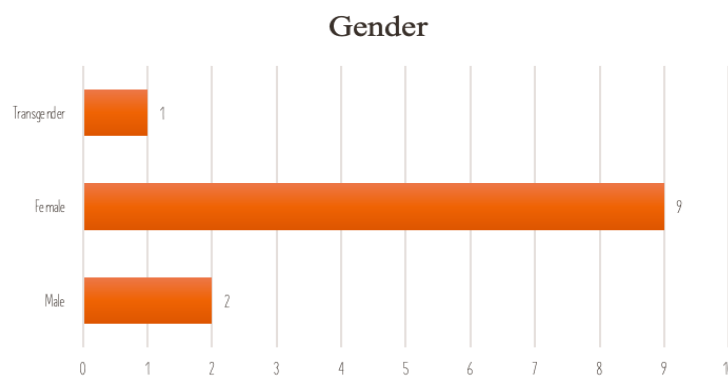

Fig. 1. Gender of the participant

The study identified a significant number of librarians aged 51-60, likely indicating a concentration of established leaders and high-level professionals in the field. Middle managers were generally found in the 41-50 age range, while the youngest participant belonged to the 31-40 age group, representing the emerging generation of public librarians (Figure 2).
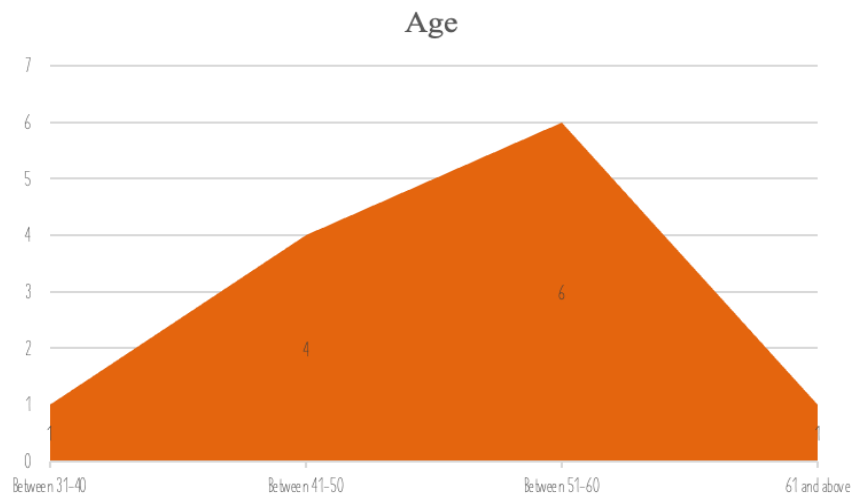
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Fig. 2. Age of participants

Table 1

Impact of information disorders

Themes	Description
Credibility Threat	This emphasizes the risk false information poses to the believability of reliable sources.
Detrimental and Problematic	Detrimental emphasizes the harmful aspects of something. Problematic suggests some issues need to be addressed.
Unfounded Claims	This cluster emphasizes the absence of evidence or a clear source for the information.
Leads to the Promotion of Truthful Information	This cluster highlights the importance of sharing accurate and reliable information.
Exploitation and Manipulation	It highlights the potential harm caused by self-proclaimed experts who commit fraud. This could involve financial exploitation, wasted time or resources, or even physical harm depending on the context.

Table 1 delves into the impact of information disorders on the librarian community. It involves the following themes:
· Credibility Threat: False information undermines the public's trust in reliable sources.
· Detrimental/Problematic: These terms highlight the negative consequences of misinformation. "Problematic" emphasizes the need for solutions.

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- · Unfounded Claims: Information lacking evidence or a clear source.
- · Promoting Truthful Information: Emphasizes the importance of sharing accurate and verifiable information.
- · Exploitation and Manipulation: Focuses on the malicious intent behind misinformation, often used by self-proclaimed experts for personal gain, potentially leading to financial loss, wasted resources, or even physical harm.

Table 2

Sample case of credibility threat

Theme	Participant	Response	Translation/Interpretation
Credibility Threat	Participant 4	"Fake news has become an unaccepted term. the term maritessing or maritess has become, you know, or chismis. Before we call it chismis, when we say chismis, it's an informal term. It's information that is not true, but it spreads throughout."	"Fake news has become an unaccepted term. Similarly, 'maritessing' or 'marites' has become synonymous with gossip, you know, chismis. But chismis itself is an informal term. It's just unverified information that spreads quickly, whether true or not."

Concerned about the spread of rumors and unverified information (like "fake news"), librarians highlight the role of gossip ("chismis") in Filipino culture. They see this gossip as a potential source of misinformation. Interestingly, a new slang term, "Marites," has emerged to describe someone who spreads gossip. This aligns with Participant 4's view of gossip being similar to fake news (Table 2).

Table 3

Sample case of problematic information

Theme	Participant	Response	Translation/Interpretation
Detrimental and Problematic	Participant 10	"So siyempre po parang nakakakonsyensya kung halimbawa na i-post ito tapos mali naman pala."	"Sharing something that might be wrong would definitely make me feel guilty afterward"

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The discussion centered on the ethical problems of spreading unverified information, also known as information disorders (Table 3). Participant 10 felt guilty after realizing they had spread misinformation.

Table 4

Sample case of unfounded claim

Theme	Participant	Response	Translation/Interpretation
Unfounded Claims	Participant 2	"Sometimes, it's exaggerated. Sometimes, it's biased especially when it comes to politics."	No translation needed

According to Table 4, unfounded claims can be exaggerated, subjective, or difficult to trace back to a source. Participant 2 supports this, noting that bias often leads to exaggeration, especially in political information.

Table 5

Sample case of promoting truthful information

Theme	Participant	Response	Translation/Interpretation
Leads to the Promotion of Truthful Information	Participant 6	"Fake news sir, may good and bad siguro sir, in my own opinion. halimbawa, nabuntis si ganito tapos hindi pala siya buntis. So yung sa reaction ng tao, yung reaction ng sinong tinutukoy, siyempre masakit sa kanya pero siyempre ayaw pala yung mabuntis."	"There are different types of false information online, sir. Some might seem positive at first, like a celebrity pregnancy announcement. But when the information turns out to be wrong, it can be hurtful to the person involved. In this case, the false pregnancy news could be upsetting for the celebrity, even if they didn't want to be pregnant."

Table 5 highlights the double-edged sword of information disorders. While they can spark efforts to promote accurate information, positivity hoaxes can have negative consequences. Participant 6 emphasizes how false positive information can lead to emotional distress when revealed.

Table 6

Sample case of information manipulation

Theme	Participant	Response	Translation/Interpretation
Exploitation and Manipulation	Participant 5	"Fake news for me is posting content in social media that harms anyone parang scam."	"Fake news for me is posting content in social media that harms anyone like a scam"

Table 6 explores how information disorder fuels two problems: the spread of harmful fake news and the rise of self-proclaimed authorities. Participant 5 emphasizes how fake news, once posted online, can cause damage just like a scam, or a fraud exploiting and manipulating people.

Results and Discussion

Detrimental to Self. Participant 10: "Sharing something that might be wrong would definitely make me feel guilty afterward." For a librarian to share a piece of misleading information, there is a sense of responsibility or regret for spreading falsity. The dissemination of false information can lead to negative consequences for both the information itself and the credibility of the person sharing it. It takes a lot of time to achieve a clear knowledge practice so as not to harm the credibility of a professional librarian. For Barclay (2018), librarians should develop techniques to identify information disorders and policies to deter their spread.

Unfounded Claim. Participant 2: "It's true I might be biased in my self-evaluation, but my gut feeling tells me it's inaccurate. That's interesting because it doesn't feel like I'm being forced to believe something. The librarian acknowledges there might be bias when evaluating information online. There is a pre-conceived personal belief that affects critical engagement with information. Westerwick (2017) discussed a phenomenon known as confirmation bias. The pre-existing prejudices and actions of social media users present librarians with an extra challenge. Decision-making and the processing of information can be influenced by social media environments.

Being Truthful and Sharing What is Right. Participant 1: "The immense influence of social media underscores the critical role of professional librarians in disseminating accurate information promptly." The librarian understands using social media can also contextualize who they are and their professional identity. The librarian who is present on social media whether for promotional, educational, or informational reasons must keep the expectations of their users.
In laboratory information systems (LIS), librarians take the responsibility of providing trusted sources of information. As librarians face infodiversity, they can cultivate critical thinking skills when consuming or sharing content. As Hranchak (2022) described, critical thinking is a social role attributed to professional librarians. Librarians have to ensure that accurate and reliable information reaches the public.

Public librarians feel that information disorders attack the credibility of information. It is "malicious information that can harm other people" (participant 8). Gossip which is transferred so quickly in social media whether it contains half-truths needs verification from the source.

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However, some may believe right away without investigating. Therefore, librarians think this is problematic. Unconsciously, despite being trained in the profession, some agree that invalid information was reposted on social media and may cause misinformation (participant 12).

Conclusions

In LIS, librarians take the responsibility of providing trusted sources of information. As librarians face infodiversity, they can cultivate critical thinking skills when consuming or sharing content. Librarians express concern about the prevalence of rumors and unverified information, often referred to as 'fake news.' They highlight the role of gossip ('chismis') in Filipino culture as a potential source of misinformation. Given the widespread dissemination of false information, librarians, as information professionals, are uniquely positioned to play a significant role in combating this issue. (Yap, Barátné Hajdu, & Kiszl, 2024). Librarians can play a pivotal role in addressing the crisis of credibility by sharing expert advice and advocating for the value of accurate information. This can help to enhance their professional standing and contribute to public trust.

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Вплив інформаційних розладів на бібліотечну спільноту

Мета. Бібліотекарі відіграють вирішальну роль у боротьбі з інформаційними розладами. Їх здатність виявляти неправдиву інформацію є ключовою професійною компетентністю. Удосконалюючи свою професійну ідентичність, бібліотекарі також розвивають міцну систему знань. Ця стаття досліджує вплив інформаційних загроз на бібліотечну спільноту. **Методика.** Було проведено інтерв'ю з групою філіппінських публічних бібліотекарів, щоб зрозуміти їхнє сприйняття серйозності та впливу інформаційних розладів на їхні спільноти. **Результати.** Після ретельного аналізу якісних даних було виділено п'ять тем: загроза довірі, шкідлива інформація, необґрунтовані твердження, маніпуляції з інформацією та просування правдивої інформації. **Висновки.** Інформаційні порушення становлять серйозну загрозу для бібліотекарів і громадськості. Зловмисники використовують їх для маніпулювання громадською думкою, що призводить до шахрайства і фальшивих експертиз. Бібліотекарі можуть протистояти цим загрозам, ділячись достовірними ресурсами. Вони також можуть подолати кризу довіри, надаючи професійні поради та пропагуючи цінність достовірної інформації.
Ключові слова: інформаційні розлади; публічні бібліотекарі; інформація в соціальних мережах; роль бібліотекарів