



by Lori Donovan, August 2017

*"You can't be distracted by the noise of misinformation."—James Daly*

Librarians have been on the front lines teaching information literacy skills on fake news, misinformation, and propaganda techniques for a long time; none of this is new. What is new, however, is the amount of and easy access to misinformation students confront in a 24-hour news cycle. This has led to discussions about the importance of teaching those critical thinking skills our students need in order to discern real news from fake news or "alternative facts." A very obvious place to teach these critical thinking skills is in the library, but how does that impact the management of your library program?

In this age of misinformation, the librarian's collection development plan becomes a vital tool to help students review facts and ideas from multiple points of view. ALA's Library Bill of Rights states, "Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval" (1996). Depending on the level, the amount and type of resources may be different, but all libraries should have a varied collection. Most standards for learning call for students to have the ability to analyze, evaluate, and problem solve as well as explain, develop, and decide (Fogarty 2013).

Because of that, making sure the school district has a sensitive materials policy and a reconsideration of materials policy is important. Having these items to support collection development plans is important when you are confronted with a challenge from a stakeholder about materials in the school library collection. The Office for Intellectual Freedom (<http://www.ala.org/offices/oif>) has resources to develop and/or revise such plans.

Libraries are resources for our teachers as well. Having resources that talk about media literacy and fake news can be beneficial to teachers and support their curriculums. Organizations such as National Association for Media Literacy Education (<https://namle.net/category/resources/>), the News Literacy Project (<http://www.thenewsliteracyproject.org/>), and Newsela (<https://newsela.com/>) provide resources for teaching media literacy in a digital age.

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Because misinformation can cause misunderstandings and hurt feelings, resources on social emotional learning from the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (<http://www.casel.org/>) can help students "acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions" ("What Is SEL?"2017). Other resources include Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (<http://www.pbis.org/>) and Kagan strategies (<https://www.kaganonline.com/>), which provide resources and training to help develop an inclusive culture in schools.

Does the school system have a digital citizenship curriculum? If so, how does social media etiquette play into those lessons? How can students build on that inclusive and respectful school culture when it comes to sharing information on social media? Does the library website have information for teachers, students, and parents on how to help students identify information from a reputable news source rather than John Doe sitting at home posting online in a blog or on social media?

Librarians can create an online resource page with lesson ideas and resources for spotting fake news, propaganda, and clickbait. A professor of media literacy at Webster University teaches her students to create fake news to help them understand better how to consume news (<http://blog.cue.org/teaching-truth-fake-news/>). In Washington state, a new law encourages the development of policies on the topic of media literacy, and lessons in one educator's classroom include an assignment in which students make up news (<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/media-literacy-can-help-students-discern-fake-news/>).

The startling news from the Stanford report that found students in middle school, high school, and college could not effectively evaluate the credibility of information presented from articles, comments, and tweets demonstrates the need for having a varied collection and resources to help support the necessary critical-thinking and communication skills necessary to navigate the world of misinformation (Domonoske 2016).

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