

HOW FAKE NEWS IMPACTS AND ENGAGE THE LIBRARY'S MISSION AND SERVICES IN NIGERIA

By

Comfort N. Owate Ph.D. CLN.

Department of Library and Information Science, Faculty of Education

University of Port Harcourt, Choba. Port Harcourt.

comfort.owate @uniport.edu.ng

Abstract

In Nigeria, social media has been a very cost-effective medium through which social ills like hate speech are spread to catalyze things like political tension, tribal sentiment, ethno-religious crises, corporate deformation, as well as character assassination. The issue of misinformation in Nigeria has reached a very high level. This paper adapted a conceptual perspective to basically examine how fake news impacts and engages the library's mission and services in Nigeria. A concerted effort was made to x-ray the meaning of fake news and how it impacts the core mission of the library, types of fake news were identified. The paper went ahead to suggest services the libraries in Nigeria can engage in to help curb the impact of fake news in Nigerian society. It was suggested that library can help to curb fake news by engaging in services like helping enable access to accurate information, assisting in the promotion of information literacy, critical evaluation of information and our sources, training students on news literacy, creating a platform for better collaboration, archiving and preservation of fake news she and review or removal of outdated recommendations on misinformation among many others. Some of the implications of fake news in Nigeria were identified Strategies like the IFLA's eight simple steps infographics on how to spot fake news, the RADAR framework, and the RAAP text were suggested as some of the good strategies for identifying fake news. The paper submitted that fake news is fuelling ethnoreligious conflicts, death, mistrust, jungle justice among many others. As a result, the paper recommends that efforts must be made by all relevant stakeholders especially the librarians to ensure that Nigerians are sensitized to understand the dangers posed by fake news as it threatens not only peace and security but the very corporate existence of the country

Keywords: Fake News. Library, Misinformation, Mission, Services.

Introduction

With the surfacing of information and communication technologies, chiefly social media, fake news is created at will and circulated with great ease. Fake news has been given several undertones by authors, however McGonagle (2017), in his article posited that fake news is made-up information that imitates media content, intentionally created and disseminated to misinform Alawode Olorede, and Azeez (2018) view fake news as news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false and could mislead renders.

In Nigeria, social media has been a very cost-effective medium through which social ills like hate speech are spread to catalyze things like political tension, tribal sentiment, ethnoreligious crises, corporate deformation, as well as character assassination. The issue of misinformation in Nigeria has reached a very high level. To curb the extent of fake news dissemination in Nigeria, In November 2019 an anti-social media bill was introduced by the Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to criminalize the use of social media in peddling false or malicious information. This bill was to prevent Falsehoods and Manipulations in internet transmission and correspondents in Nigeria. The problem now is not just the Sheer of online information but also the ease with which people can “create and disseminate inaccurate and misleading information” (Fallis 2015-402). One may beg to ask, "How does this import the library mission? This paper tries to take a conceptual view of how fake news impacts engages the library's mission and services in Nigeria.

Literature Review

According to Aina (2004). The library is a bank of knowledge and an active social service institution, an indispensable resource centre for reliable information and meant to conserve the recorded knowledge for the benefit of mm. Therefore "fake news" has become a major concern for international organizations, policymakers, media actors, civil society, academia, and libraries in particular the established custodians of authentic, reliable and verifiable information. There have been so many assertions that this is a very good opportunity for libraries to still show their values by helping to fight news, misinformation disinformation, and the like given that the challenge posed by misinformation is to a great extent constructed in opposition to traditional library mission, values and services. Berry (2016) arts the hitch of misinformation "reinforces the very basis the libraries were created in the first place. The American Library Association (ALA) states that fake news, even though sad, could be an incredible opportunity for libraries to remind the community of one of their primary functions which is that the library was created to be an indispensable resource centre for reliable Information (in Dollinger, 2017).

In January, the organization published its Resolution on Access to Accurate information (ALA, 2017), which it mated its opposition to “the use of disinformation; media manipulation, and other tactics that undermine access to accurate information,” urges library to raise awareness and to provide accurate information to severe than counters disinformation, and connects the efforts not just to the mission of the ALA, but to the larger of librarianship in informing and educating the general public on critical problems facing society Kenney (2017) writing in publishers w describes fake news and "out prost-truth polities as an affront to the field of librarianship and an attack on its primary mission to be custodians of reliable und verifiable information, us, therefore, das that like news impacts negatively on the mission of the library and sends a signal to librarians for them to lead conversations about reliable sources Jacobson (2017) seems in be on the same page as opined that an outlook of the unprecedented problem of discriminating between facts from fictions online, librarians have an opportunity to take leadership is the current predicament, and advised them to “step up-to the plate”

Types of Fake News

Claire Wardle cited in Ogbette, Idam, Kareem and Ogbette (2019), spotted six types of fake news;

- Satire or Parody: no clear intent to cause harm or damage, but can fool.
- False Connection when news headlines, visuals or headers do not support the content.
- Misleading Content misleading use of information to frame a topic or an individual.
- Imposter Content when genuine sources are mimicked with fake and made-up sources
- Manipulated Content when genuine information or imagery is manipulated to deceive, as with doctored photos.
- Fabricated Content when news content is 100% false, premeditated to deceive and damage or harm.

From the abovementioned, it is apparent that news takes diverse forms, from the harmless to the harmful. This perception is needful in discussing fake news as a societal vice. However, most fins in Nigeria the principal aim of promoters and mongers of fake news is to instigate acts capable of cursing disunity among people.

Some Implications of Fake News in Nigeria

Plotted Story of Nigerian Army Spreading Monkey Pox Virus.

In the year 2017, the Nigerian Army began free medical service and was administering polio vaccines in south-eastern Nigeria. News began to spread that the army was going to schools to inject pupils with the monkeypox virus. This resulted in a massive panic that led to the closure of my schools in the southeast. Students left their schools in a hurry and disturbed parents came to pick up these children (Okoro et al 2018). Hence, the free medical service was interrupted by the Lake News circulation.

Fake news on Ebola 'cure' led to the death of two

In 2014, a fake message telling people they could avoid contacting the Ebola disease by bathing and drinking large quantities of salt water went viral on social media even though it was not proven medically. This harmful prescription led to death of two people and left several people hospitalized because of high prevalence of hypertension due to excess consumption of salt. (Carter 2014). This shows that Nigerians hardly verify the authenticity of information before sharing and this has led to panic, death, and injury though the motive behind such staring was believed to preserve lives.

Fake Facebook post intensifies the regional and religious crisis

A study in Plateau State of Nigeria, reveals false information on Facebook which caused an inters-ethnic crisis (Ojebode, 2018). An image of a mutilated baby who was killed in Congo

Brazzaville in 2012, went viral claiming that the act was carried out by the Fulanis against the Beroms in Jos in 2018. It was reported that the Beroms youths went to the street against the Fulani men in retaliation. The authorities believed that the Facebook post contributed to the Crisis: That same image has been used severally to incite regional crisis in other parts of Africa. (Dichode, 2018). Fake news has caused a lot of regional and religious crisis in Nigeria and this has further threatened the peace and unity of the country.

Fake photos and news worsen apprehension between the herdsmen and farmers' conflict

Past research has reported that fake photos circulated online Nigerians are intensifying the conflicts that exist between the herdsmen and farmers (Edwin & Valmi, 2019) For instance, a gruesome photo of a woman lying in a pool of blood was passively circulated on Twitter with the claim that she was victim of the violence. This fake Tweet caused inflammatory Comments and further chaos resulting in the death of many Nigerians. It was later revealed that the image was of a traffic accident in the Dominican Republic Edwin & Valms. 2019) in the same vein. Siddika (2019) found that a certain story about the Fulanis diagnosed to attack people in some parts of Osun State trended on various WhatsApp platforms. The statement reads:

Services libraries can render to help each the impact of fake news

Help enable access accurate information: Accordingly, the 2017 ALA resolution declares that "access to accurate information, not censorship, is the best way to counter disinformation and media manipulation. The library can help to provide unfettered access to information, this will discourage the fake news promoters from disseminating fake news because people know where to get accurate information without the challenge of censorship.

Assist in the Promotion of information literacy:

Another way this menace ravaging society can be countered is by promoting information literacy of one kind or another Discussing Florid (1996) suggestions for combating what was then the disinformation on the Internet, Calvert (19598) argued that information literacy had the greatest consensus among librarians and was the least controversial.

Critical Evaluation: the critical evaluation of information and its sources is also a good way of fighting fake news, the library can help by learning and promoting Critical evaluation skills to help in the fight against fake news. For instance, Baer (2018) writes of examining evidence, assessing validity, and. identifying expertise as a major step to tackling the lake news, Cooke (2018) thinks that the library can teach people how to evaluate, sort, and effectively the overabundance of information available online.

Training students on news literacy: Libraries can Incorporate news literacy into existing Library orientation courses, offer optional workshops for students, develop course modules and more Although some faculty have reached out to librarians to help address concerns about news literacy (Wade & Homick, 2018) Others remain unaware of the connection between news literacy and information literacy, and that librarians could tailor instruction sessions around fake news".

Creation of platform for better collaboration: There is a need for collaboration between the librarians, researchers and members of the media, and the creation of a platform for providing journalists with crowd-sourced data on emerging news. There may be ways for librarians to contribute to such a platform if not on the breaking news side, then in terms of providing curated, contextualized information sources for others. Librarians in Nigeria can do this to help curb the spread of fake news and example on the digital level is the First Draft News (Lazer et al 2017).

Archiving and preservation of fake news sites: Librarians and archivists can also support efforts to archive fake news sites for researchers (Commisso, 2017).

Review or removal of outdated recommendations and misinformation: Libraries can help also by reviewing those outdated recommendations that no longer reflect the misinformation landscape. These include appraising websites based on shallow qualities or expecting users to be able to precisely access the reliability of a site by digging "deeper into the pages or verifying the content of a site independently, which almost always requires background or some domain knowledge. A better approach might be teaching user show to read "laterally" (Wineburg et al, 2016) Instructional tools should also be updated with resources about image and video verification (Anderson, 2018).

Some Recommendations on how to identify fake news

Several recommendations have been made on how to identify fake news online, though not fool proofs but to some level help in curbing the impact of fake news Notable recommendation is that recommended by The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) based on FactCheck.org's 2016 article on how to spot fake news. IFLA came out with an infographic of eight simple steps on how to spot fake news. The figures below show the eight simple steps.

HOW TO SPOT FAKE NEWS

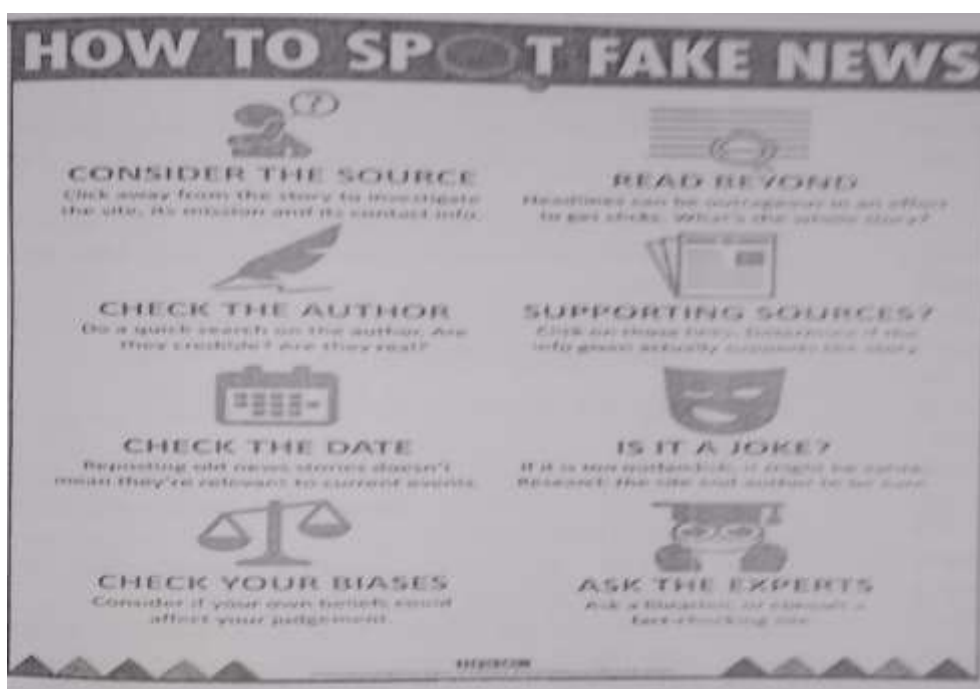


Figure 10: How to spot fake news (Source: <https://www.ifla.org/publications/node/11174>)

Among many other recommendations are the RADAR framework, the term RADAR is an acronym meaning Rationale Authority Date Accuracy and Relevance and CRAAP test which means Currency Relevance. Authority, Accuracy, and Purpose.

RADAR Framework

The **RADAR Framework** helps one to remember what kinds of questions one is to be asking about an information source as it is been evaluated for quality and usefulness (<https://libguides.Imu.edu/aboutRADAR>)

Rationale is important because books, articles and web pages are made to serve a purpose: They can educate, entertain, or sell a product or point of view, in rationale questions such as "Why did the author make this information available? Is there a sponsor or advertising? Who pays to help make this Information available?" Are alternative points of view presented? Does the author omit any important facts or data that might disprove their claim? Does the author use strong emotional language? Are there other emotional clues such as all caps? Are they been answered?

Authority is important in judging the credibility of the author's assertions. Here are questions such as what are the author's credentials? Is the author affiliated with an educational institution or a prominent organization? Can you find information about the author in reference books or on the Internet? Do other books or articles on the same research topic cite the author? Is the publisher of the information source reputable? Search by publisher name (peer reviewed journal or reputable publisher? If it's the Internet, is it fabricated or intended as satire? Check the "About" page and Google it with the word "fake" to make sure it's legit. All this question items should be addressed to get the authority of the information.

Date, currency, are important to ante because information can quickly become obsolete Supporting your research with facts that have been superseded by new research of recent events weakens your argument. This also comes with some simple questions the information user needs to address to spot if the news is fake or not, questions such as when was the information published or last updated. Have newer articles been published on your topic? Art links or references to her date is your topic to an area that changes rapidly technology of science? Is the Information obsolete? Are the information important to be addressed?

Accuracy is important because errors and untruths distort a line of reasoning. When you present inaccurate information, you undermine credibility. Questions such as are there, statements you know to be false? Verify an unlikely story by finding a reputable outlet reporting the same thing was the information reviewed by editors or subject experts before it was published was checked? How do you know? Do the citations and references support the author's claim are the references currently cited? Follow the links if there are no references or bad references, this could be a red flag. All these and many others not be addressed to help the information user spot the accuracy of the news.

Relevance is important because you are expected to support your ideas with pertinent information. The Information user or student needs to face questions like Does the information answer your research question? Does the information meet the stated requirements for the assignment? Is the information too technical or too simplified for you use? Who is the intended audience? Does the source something to your knowledge the top is the information focused on the geographical you are interested in?

CRAAP Test

Currency: the timeliness of the information

- When the information published on posted?
- Has the information been revised or updated?
- Is the information current or out-of-date for your topic?
- Are the lines functional?

Relevance the importance the information for your needs

- Does the information relate to your topic answer your question?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Is the information at an appropriate level (i.e not too elementary of advanced fit your needs)?
- Have you looked at a variety of sources before determining this is theme you will use?
- Would you be comfortable using this source for a research paper?

Authority: the source of the information

- Who is the author/publisher/source/sponsor?
- Are the author's credentials or organizational affiliations given?
- What are the author's credentials or organizational affiliations given?
- What are the author's qualifications to write on the topic?
- Is there contact information, such as a publisher or e-mail address?
- Does the URL reveal anything about the author or source?
 - examples
 - .com (commercial), edu (educational), gov. (U.S government)
 - .org (nonprofit organization), or
 - .net (network)

Accuracy: the reliability, truthfulness, and correctness of the content

- Where does the information come from?
- Is the information supported by evidence?
- Has the information been reviewed or refereed?
- Can you verify any of the information from another source or from personal knowledge?
- Does the language or tone seem biased or free of emotion?
- Are there spelling, grammar, typographical errors?

Purpose: the reason the information exists

- What is the purpose of the information? To Inform? Teach? Sell? Entertain? Persuade?
- Do the authors/sponsors make their intentions or purpose clear?
- Is the information fact or opinion? Propaganda?
- Does the point of view appear objective and impartial?
- Are there political, ideological, cultural, religious, institutional, or personal biases?
(<https://researchguides.ben.edu/source-evaluation>).

Conclusion

In Nigeria fake news has an arguably more invidious and dangerous purpose to stoke rivalries and hostilities between different ethnic nationalities, the countries mainly Muslim north against the predominantly Christian south. Nobel Prize laureate Wole Soyinka, described the threats being capable of causing world war 3 in his word he stated thus: "I've said this before that fake news may cause World War 3 and that fake news will be started by a Nigerian Therefore the library has to be at the forefront in the lighting of this virus that is about to consume everyone in order to save the society from being crippled by the infiltration of fake news. If librarians indeed have an important role to play in this project, then it is time to show that community what we've got.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of study and the conclusion the following recommendations were offered

1. Efforts must be made by all relevant stakeholders especially the librarians to ensure that Nigerians are sensitized to understand the dangers posed by fake news as if threatens not only the peace and security of the citizens, but the corporate existence of the country.
2. Libraries should still show their values by helping to fight fake news, misinformation, disinformation and the likes, given that the challenge posed by misinformation le to a great extent an opposition to the traditional library mission, values and services.
3. Citizens of Nigeria should desist from instigating acts capable of causing disunity among people by not being mongers of fake news.
4. Nigerians should verify the genuineness of a message pries in sharing especially on social media, as this may cause panic, death and injury.
5. The RADAR Framework and the CRAAP Test which helps one to remember what kind questions to be asked about an information source, quality and usefulness, be applied by information users.

Reference

- Aina, O. (2004). Library and Information Science text for Africa. Ibadan, third world information service.
- Alawode, W., Oloreste, O., & Areez, L. D. (2018). Fake news and public perception of Nigerian's online media Implications for national security. A paper presented at the 1st national conference of the academic Staff Polytechnics Federal Polytechnic Offa, held between 2nd to 5th October 2018.
- American Library Association (2017), Resolution on access to accurate Information ALA <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/Intireedu> m
statementspols/ifresolutions/accurate/information.

- Anderson, K. E. (2018) Getting acquainted with social networks and apps: Combating fake news on social media. *Library H Tech News* 35(3), 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.1108/LHTN-02-2018-0010>
- Baer, (2018). It's all relative? Post-truth rhetoric, relativism, and Teaching on "Authority Constructed and Contextual. *C&RI News*, 79(2), 72-75. <http://doi.org/10.5860/crfm.79.2.22>
- Berry. I. N. (2016). The Misinformation Age. *Library Journal*, 141(14), 10.
- Calvert, P. J. (1998). Web-based misinformation in the context of higher education. *Asian Libraries*, 8(3), 83-91.
- Carter M. (2014) How Twitter may have helped Nigeria contain Ebola BNJ: *British Journal (online)*, 349.
- Commisso, C. (2017). The post-truth archive: considerations for archiving context in fake news repositories. *PDT&C*. 46(3), 99-102.
- Cooks, N. A (2018). Critical literacy as an approach to combating cultural misinformation/disinformation on the Internet. In D. E Agosto (Ed). *Information literacy and libraries in the age of fake news* (pp. 36-51). Santa Barbara. Libraries Unlimited
- Dellinger, A. (2017) Can librarians save us from fake news? VICE, 21 March. Available <https://www.vice.com/mws/articthecan-librarians-save-us-from-fake-news> (accessed 15 October 2021).
- Edwin, M. R., & Yalimi, O. L. (2019), Fake News and Home Truths. Its Effects on the Contemporary Political Narrative: An Appraisal of India and Nigeria. *International Journal and Humanity Social Science*, 9(6), 26-29.
- Floridi, L. (1996) Brave.Net World: The Internet as a disinformation superhighway? *Electronic Library* 4(5), 509-514
- Kenney B (2017). Three critical issues facing librarianship in Trump's America Publishers Weekly, 3 January Available at <http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/libraries/article/72493-1f-beuifies-in-the-age-of-trump.html> (accessed 15 October 2022)
- Lazer. D., Baum, M., Grinberg, N., Friedland L K. Hobbs, W. & Muttsson, C (2017) Combating fake news: An agenda for research and action. Final report from conference held February 17-18, 2017. <https://shorensmemcenter.org/combating-fake-news-agenda-for-research>
- McGonagle, T. (2017). "Fake news: False tears or real concerns Netherlands Quarterly of Human Rights 35(4), 203-209 <https://doi.org/10.1177/0924051917738685>

- Ogbette, A., S., Idam, M. O., Kareem. A. D., & Ogbatte, D. N. (2019), Fake news in Nigeria: causes management information Knowledge management 9(2). Available <http://www.researchgate.net> (cel Aod 26/10/2020)
- Ojebode, A. (2018) Fake news, hate speech and the 2019 general elections: the redemptive role of the Nigerian media being the text of the 13th annual public lecture of the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN).
- Okoro. E. M. Abara, B. A. Umagba, A. D. Ajonye. A. A. & Isa. Z. S. (2018). A hybrid approach to fake news detection on social media. *Nigerian Journal of Technology*, 454 <https://doi.org/10.4314/njt.v3712.22>.
- Siddiki, G. (2019) Southeast will boil any moment from now because of their stubbornness. www.nkelicious.net
- Wade S., & Hornick, J (2018). Stop! Don't share that story! Designing a pop-up undergraduate workshop on fake news. *Reference pop-up Librarian*. <https://doi.org/108/02763877> 2018 10
- Wineburg. S., McGrew, S. Breakstone, J., & Ortega, T. (2016). Evaluating information: The cornerstone of civic online reasoning. Stanford History Education Group. November 22 <https://puri.stanford.edu/fv751y15934>