



IFLA International News Media Conference 2024

Management of Information Use in Libraries: Leveraging the Role of Media Josefa Fuentes

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Abstract:

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The role of media in democracies stands as a cornerstone in classical reflections on the significance of a sector that has consistently shaped public opinion within democratic states. The right to information has, in many ways, been materialized largely due to the existence of journalism and mass media. However, the contemporary landscape demands a didactic approach to the sources of information citizens consult, as many accessible sources through networks (Internet and social media) are not journalistic in nature. Thus, the focus shifts towards the right to "accurate information."

Within a parliamentary library, managing and providing access to news information must always consider that users embody the diversity of ideologies within a nation. Curating a list of news requires clear criteria regarding the sources to be used, with items explicitly stating the newspaper of origin as a sine qua non condition.

In the Senate Library, the use of journalistic information is structured around several key aspects:

- *Facilitating parliamentary access to primary sources: Parliamentarians have access to a comprehensive collection of daily national, foreign, and local newspapers within the library premises, encompassing approximately 35 titles.*
- *Meeting information needs through historical newspaper searches: The library subscribes to the DJX database, enabling librarians to conduct retrospective searches for parliamentary inquiries.*
- *Custodial and preservation efforts: The library diligently preserves all copies of two national newspapers dating back to the inception of the democratic period in 1978. These preserved pages can be reproduced for users and showcased in Senate bibliographic exhibitions.*
- *Historical complement: By preserving select titles of political newspapers and magazines from the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, the library enriches its bibliographic exhibitions, providing insights into the historical backdrop of political discourse.*

This paper delves into the multifaceted approach taken by the Senate Library in managing and utilizing journalistic information, highlighting its crucial role in serving the informational needs of parliamentarians and preserving the historical narrative for future generations.

Keywords: media, sources of information, parliamentary library, media literacy, newspaper archives, library reference service.

Paper:

In the Senate Library, the use of journalistic information is structured in a multifaceted approach, and I would like to highlight two basic aspects of it. One is its crucial role in serving the informational needs of parliamentarians and the other is its lead in preserving the historical narrative for future generations.

The following services are provided by this specialized library for Members:

- Offering access to primary sources (daily Press): Parliamentarians stay informed about current affairs by accessing a comprehensive collection of daily national, foreign, and local newspapers within the library premises, encompassing approximately 35 titles, subscribed to in their online editions. Additionally, the Press Service at the Senate compiles daily clippings of current news related to the Senate and political affairs.
- Meeting information needs through newspaper archive searches: The library subscribes to the DJX database and soon also to *PressReader* platform, enabling librarians to conduct retrospective searches for parliamentary inquiries, preparation of dossiers and reports.
- Custodial and preservation efforts: The Senate library, in collaboration with the Congress of Deputies library, diligently preserve all copies of two national newspapers dating back to the inception of the present and most recent democratic period started in 1978. These preserved pages serve as a historical archive of journalistic information that can be reproduced for users and [showcased in Senate bibliographic exhibitions](#).
- Historical complement: By preserving copies of fairly long time intervals of select titles of [political newspapers and magazines from the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries](#), the library enriches its bibliographic exhibitions, and offers [access to researchers](#), providing insights into the historical backdrop of political discourse that shaped the destinies of nations.
- Upcoming developments:
 - ✓ The library will incorporate an explicit block of information sourced from the press into the documentary dossiers.
 - ✓ Librarians intend to incorporate newspaper database archives to fulfill document requests from users, providing them thus with additional information sourced from published press (full-text news articles), in order to connect news pieces and present different perspectives of a story. This ensures that parliamentarians have

access to a wide range of archived, valuable information, aiding them in their legislative duties and decision-making processes.

Serving Informational Needs

Parliamentary libraries provide Members of parliament with access to government information, media content, and publications from institutional, academic, and solvent private sources. This information is verified based on its origin and clear authorship (quality assurance principle). Within a parliamentary library, managing and providing access to news information must always consider that users, who are Members of Parliament, embody the diversity of ideologies within a nation. Curating a news list necessitates clear criteria for selecting sources, with items explicitly identifying their original news agency or newspaper source as a fundamental requirement. The principle of apolitical conduct is mandatory for parliamentary librarians.

The role of media in democracies stands as a cornerstone in classical reflections on the significance of a sector that has consistently shaped public opinion within democratic countries. The right to information has, in many ways, been materialized largely due to the existence of journalism and mass media. However, the contemporary landscape demands a didactic approach to the nature of sources of information our users consult, as the majority of accessible sources through networks (Internet and social media) are not journalistic in nature.

Thus, the focus shifts towards the right to "accurate information."

Curating News Information and data

Furthermore, the hyperproduction of written (as well as graphic and audiovisual) information is a phenomenon that librarians have been contending with since the advent of the Internet. The information overload is attempted to be alleviated by librarians offering our users a permanent interface, at least in one direction. Librarians take proactive steps to ensure that the information they provide is most impactful for their users. With the vast amount of openly published research now accessible, the assistance librarians offer in comprehending and transforming it into usable inputs for policymaking remains as crucial as ever. And not only published research is useful: media information provides important data in parliaments. All in all, information overload directly impacts misinformation and the risk of dissemination of inaccurate data.

Understanding how the media landscape (including traditional media as well as social networks) affects both parliamentarians and citizens is becoming increasingly critical.

The architecture of the Internet reveals how the digital environment operates and its impact on users. This encompasses how algorithms and personalized media experiences influence us, how our access to content contributes to polarization and groupthink, and how it commodifies personal information. Additionally, it addresses how media business models (such as free content versus paid content) affect the understanding and interpretation of information. Understanding Internet architecture is the first step toward making founded decisions about operating within the digital space.

Challenges in the Contemporary Media Landscape. Role of libraries in Media Literacy

In this environment, libraries play a crucial role in promoting media literacy among users. Initiatives such as those by the American Library Association (ALA)ⁱ aim to enhance adults' media literacy developing resources to support libraries in their efforts to enhance adult media literacy skills: training in navigation, search, information filtering, data evaluation, and verification, serving as tools against uncertaintyⁱⁱ.

Reflections and Conclusion

On the 3rd of this month, once again, we commemorated World Press Freedom Day, proclaimed on May 3, 1993, by the United Nations General Assembly, following the recommendation of the UNESCO General Conference. As we commemorate World Press Freedom Day it is essential to acknowledge the significance of a free press in democratic societies. Journalism provides an intellectual service to societies and is bound by an indispensable ethical practice for the proper provision of such service.

I would like to reflect on three insightful quotes to wrap up my remarks, which serve as the final contribution of this Conference:

The first quote could be tagged as “Governments oversight as exerted by the media: in view of it, self-victimization of governments before society. Demagogy becomes a trend”. The author is José Ignacio Torreblanca:

"(...) governments are accountable to the citizens who have entrusted them with power. To achieve this, they must be held to account by the opposition (...) by the media, which must be capable of providing accurate and verified information, and by the judiciary.

(...) the media are diverse and can be taken to court if they infringe upon the truth and the honor of individuals and be condemned to rectify.

(...) Government and leaders must subject themselves to these checks naturally and accept them as part of the political game, not present themselves to society or their voters as victims of them. (...) those with the highest responsibility in government in a democracy must uphold and submit to the fundamental rules that govern our political game (...) Because failing to do so would be abandoning their systemic function (...) which is to guarantee the stability and legitimacy of the system.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Second quote: They may seem like common knowledge, but in this regard, it is worth considering the conclusions reached by Kahneman, Nobel Prize-winning economist and psychologist, who passed away two months ago. Specializing in 'the psychology of decision-making,' his book *Thinking, Fast and Slow* provides a vivid illustration of the cognitive process involved in receiving messages amidst this jungle of abundant high-quality materials created economically by ordinary people, generating more 'noise' in the media space: Kahneman asserts that demagogues succeed because they can afford to dispense with solid arguments: if their followers believe a conclusion, they will believe the arguments supposedly confirming it, however weak they may be. The phenomenon of unwavering faith in any irrational proposition (the simpler and more repeated,

the more effective) thrives with the support of a community of like-minded believers. This helps understand why so many people follow the current charlatan of the moment^{iv}.

In recent times, we have been experiencing the impacts of political polarization. How do we engage in constructive dialogue with those who disagree with us? What steps can we take to address polarization?

The third quote I wish to share here is about columnists. It has been written by a columnist journalist, Bárbara Blasco:

“It's a fact that everything has become filled with opinion, including journalism, probably because the collapse of what we call *reality* has brought forth with strength what we call *the self* to save it. Never before have we had so much information at our fingertips, and never before have we needed so much to interpret, connect the dots, give them meaning. Since the networks buried us in a mountain of real-time news, turning anyone into a journalist or photographer, we need more than ever the guidance of opinion. (...) It's been a while since I no longer know how to do without 'doubt'. It seems to me the only guide to reaching a decent conclusion, to delve into the forest and peer into that dark and beautiful lake at the bottom of which they say the truth lies, even though no one has seen it. Doubt that leads to exploration, to understanding the reasons of the other, even if they are at your ideological antipodes (...) Of course, not to stay there, but to return with firmer steps.

And it's that every exercise of writing is a way back, which cannot exist without the way there.”^v

These are words for reflection, imbued with gratitude for the practice of a profession—journalism—fraught with risks, challenges, and personal introspection.

As we stand at the crossroads of democracy, it is incumbent upon us to reflect upon the profound implications of a free press and an informed society. In the words of Torreblanca, the accountability of governments and the vigilance of the media are the cornerstones of a functioning democracy, ensuring that power remains tethered to the will of the citizenry. As we navigate these challenges, let us embrace a commitment to truth and integrity in media and information dissemination.

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ⁱ Some examples of ALA media literacy developed resources to support libraries in their efforts to enhance adult media literacy skills:

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^{iv} Kahneman, Daniel. *Pensar rápido, pensar despacio*, Ed. Debate 2011.

^v Blasco, Bárbara (27 March 2024). Yo opino buenas noches. *El Mundo*.