

How librarians can engage citizens to use open access contents and open data as a source for fact-checking

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Abstract. This paper describes the *BiblioVerifica* blog, which is an attempt by librarians to fight misinformation by using media and data literacy, engaging citizens as awareness users of the social networks, chats and blogs.

BiblioVerifica aims to be a public engagement project based on information literacy practices, implementing tips and tricks about search tools, reliable sources, verification strategies. This non-profit initiative promotes fact-checking based on open resources as data, journals, tools, etc.

Keywords: public engagement, fact-checking, misinformation, information literacy, open access.

Introduction

Today, in a world where everyone can share contents and check the news on social media, the relevance of evaluating information is more apparent than ever.

The *BiblioVerifica* blog aims to be a public engagement project based on information literacy practices, in order to develop public understanding of science [1].

BiblioVerifica's editorial staff [2] supports citizens with the information literacy ‘anti-dote’, by realising recommendations and actions to enhance critical thinking skills, the key competences to address them - behind confirmation bias - in the information landscape.

The goal of the blog is to encourage every citizen to do fact-checking, sharing librarians tools, tips and tricks, as the IFLA's infographic "*How to spot fake news*"[3]: any user can transform themselves into a debunker, without political proposal or self-produced data, by checking news through reliable open data and open content (i.e. OAJournals/books).

1. Nine practices of public engagement

In 2017 *BiblioVerifica* started to propose its practices to involve citizens.

- Fostering participation in public consultation #tacklefakenews

Librarians foster citizens to answer to the public consultation “Tackle Fake news” [4] promoted by the European Union to create strategies against false news.

- Hoax Oscar

The blog's followers propose some fake news for nomination as the “Hoax Oscar” [5]. Then all blog users can vote on the best hoax, between *BiblioVerifica day* (25th March) and International fact checking day (2nd April).

- **World Book Day and Copyright 23 April (UNESCO)**
Taking into account UNESCO initiative [6], all *BiblioVerifica* followers can recommend books for fact-checking, data journalism, debunking, information and media literacy. The blog begins a platform for sharing book titles, ‘reversing’ the paradigm of information literacy, by becoming citizens into a source of reference.
- **The Sustainable Development Festival**
Among the events of the Festival of Sustainable Development promoted by Alleanza Italiana per lo Sviluppo Sostenibile (ASVIS), the seminar "Sources, Tools, Sustainable Strategies to debunk #fakenews" [7] at *Vilfredo Pareto* Library, University of Rome ‘Tor Vergata’ is proposed. Students are engaged in debunking tools, tips and tricks.
- **Tutor civico vs fake news - Antico Caffè Social**
In Ariccia, a town near Rome, citizens participated in a discussion with journalists Fulvio Benelli and Cristiano Barbarossa (Discovery Channel Italy) about hoaxes and misinformation on TV and social media at the bar Antico Caffè Social [8].
- **BiblioVerifica Italy Olympics**
A contest was created for our followers based on self-assessment quizzes[9]. Every citizen have been immediately received the point scored by quiz, detailing correct / wrong answers, showing public ranking of the participants in real time.
- **BiblioVerifica's School**
Within the "Digital Citizenship Project" developed in the middle school "IC Marianna Dionigi " (Lanuvio - Rome), tools and tips for fact-checking were explained. The students played games [10] and watched videos about misinformation and fake news, showing the IFLA infographic and "The Manifesto of Non-Hostile Communication" [11].
- **CrowdSearcher.cloud**
During Open Access week 2018, the international blog *CrowdSearcher.cloud* [12] was set up. This is a new interactive space to engage European and international debates by advocating the dimension of openness.
- **Customizable 2019 calendar**
In December, *BiblioVerifica* invited librarians and archivists to share events for the following year about information and data literacy, resulting in a creation of a public calendar [13] downloadable by citizens.

Conclusion

The *BiblioVerifica* is an ongoing conversation with citizens, centering around a specific fact or questions, by supporting search in the media that they consume. The focus of these engagement practices is to foster citizens to develop debates and analytical reasoning in the interaction and processing of information, without political propaganda or biased ideology.

Librarians play a facilitating role in supporting citizens in order to verify facts and news using good practices, sharing collaborative space and tools, focusing on reliable

open resources. It means promoting fact-checking to fight the misinformation, sharing strategies based on principles of accuracy, traceability, transparency, accountability, independence and impartiality.

This blog has been created, designed and developed by the librarians of the Wilfredo Pareto Library of the University of Rome “Tor Vergata”. Owing to its contents, it is one of the initiatives with which this library intends to play an active role in the processes of training and education for long-life learning. The Library embraces the Third Mission of University[14] and the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda (specifically SDGs 4.6 /16.10) [15] for economic, environmental and social development.

Take action now to transform our world!

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