

The role of public services in the “Post-fact Era”

Post-election, those of us who work in libraries are increasingly aware of the many emerging challenges facing challenges to the library and the role of the library as a critical part of our democracy. These challenges include possible budget cuts which impact services and resources; the pace of misinformation on the internet and the existence of fake news sites which can impact our ability to promote informed inquiry; and the public perception of facts which can impact the efforts of librarians to promote critical inquiry. Information policy and intellectual freedom are also being challenged.

Some have labeled this as a “Post-fact Era” in which, to our minds, reference service and rigorous information literacy instruction has never been more important. We have always challenged students and users to be critical thinkers about information: check the author, check the publisher and check the legitimacy of your sources. Now we must be even more skeptical of both printed and online sources: who is behind the website? Is it a partisan or advocacy website? How can you know? For partisan or advocacy websites, what’s their agenda? How it is funded? How transparent is it? Do its articles and reports provide named sources of information with links to source material so readers can check the facts themselves?

Public services librarians and library staff are the front lines our library ecosystems. As *Reference Services Review* journal editors, we join our readers in advocating for reference and instruction services as essential and fundamental building blocks of informed citizenship. It is this simple: real reference, real instruction, right now, has never been more important.

The articles in this issue reflect our commitment to strengthening libraries, librarians and library staff through opportunities to read and learn about what our colleagues are doing. Readers can find articles about outreach and marketing (Del Bosque, Mitola, Skarl and Heaton), research consultations (both the Kani and the Rogers and Carrier articles) and writing centers and information literacy (Graves, Anders and Balester). Two manuscripts consider mobile technologies for information literacy (Woxland, Cochran, Davis, Lundstrom; Mullins). Not surprisingly, authors continue to grapple with the “Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education” (Rinne; Hurley and Potter).

Another article describes development of a shared repository of information literacy learning objects (O’Neill.) Note that O’Neill’s piece was based on a presentation at Library Instruction West; RSR has been honored to publish a selection of LIW (formerly Loex of the West) papers for many years. Our next issue, 45:2, will feature several others.

The next two upcoming issues of *Reference Service Review* will feature articles themed around transfer students and students in transition. While transfer students are nothing new on college and university campuses, including notable transfer graduates such as former USA President Barack Obama (Clark, 2009), their numbers have been increasing steadily in the past two decades (Hoover, 2010). In the forthcoming issues, we



will explore many facets of this growing student population, and how academic libraries can help them succeed.

Editorial

Sarah Barbara Watstein

University of North Carolina, Wilmington, North Carolina, USA, and

Eleanor Mitchell

Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, USA

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References

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