

## Librarians Role in Reducing Negative Impact of Fake News for Library Users

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Disruptive era not only gave birth to "disturbances" and changes in the business world, but also affected various aspects of life. One of the "disturbed" fields is the field of information in a form that is difficult to monitor and or control. The difficulties are mainly due to the presence of social media that inhabit cyberspace. Information disturbances including fake news are increasingly prevalent on social media.

Fake news or junk news or pseudo-news, is a kind of propaganda that consists of deliberate diverting of information or deception spread through both traditional news media (print and broadcast), as well as online social media. Misinformation is often caused by the practice of buying and selling news from its source or the problem of violating journalistic code of ethics. The presence of cyberspace (especially social media) has increased the numbers and negative impact of false news multiplically. The fake news has a chance to become viral as misinformation on social media and often even affects print media. In turn, the false news is actually believed to be valid information that impacts various aspects of life.

This paper discusses the role of librarians to help their users in responding to fake news that fills the virtual world of social media. The discussion starts from the presentation of the forms and motives for spreading the fake news. Behavior of the recipients of the fake news and analysis of it from the cultural point of view, especially the Minangkabau culture in West Sumatra which inherited oral culture, rather than written culture, is discussed as well. The discussions lead to librarians' potential efforts to reduce the negative impact of fake news, at least, for their library users.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

In the past, an angler sat by the river with a fishing rod in his hand. On the rod, was hung a string end with an iron hook filled with bait, usually a worm. The angler had to patiently wait. If it was successful, the angler would get fish, fish, and fish, although occasionally he got an old sandal as well.

Nowadays, the angler stretched nets from both sides of the river. In a shorter time, on the net various objects were snagged, ranging from fish, sandals, mattresses, clothes, and others. He had to sort out the objects to take the fish. The fish sometimes also needed to be sorted again so that what were taken home are edible fish, not poisonous fish.

Information is also like that. In the past, information that came was almost always from official sources. With the limitations of the media, information must be filtered out by the information source manager. As a result, recipients get information that can be believed to be accurate. Nowadays, internet —such as nets— produces various kinds of information from various sources, official or not, accurate or not.

Like poisonous fish being carried and consumed by the angler, inaccurate information becomes a "poison" for recipients who trust and more toxic for recipients who share it. The information spreads very quickly, even in seconds, to recipients anywhere on the earth. The

spread speed multiplies like a series of measurements because each recipient potentials to become the next spreader. The main factor of that situation is internet

More detail, in 2018, it was estimated that 3.8 billion people on earth access the internet at least once every month<sup>1</sup>. Internet users in Indonesia are ranked sixth in the world, with 112.6 million (46.98% from 261 million Indonesia's population) in 2017 and increasing to 123 million (46.42% from 265 million<sup>2</sup> Indonesia's population) in April 2018. That is, within four months, the users increased by 10.4 million of people.

Data transfer, storage and distribution occur in 3V, namely Volume, Velocity and Variety. In terms of volume, data is measured in terrabytes (1,000 GB) to zettabytes (1,000 billion GB)<sup>3</sup>. A study conducted at the University of California, San Diego reported that in 2008, the people of the United States consumed 3.6 zettabytes of information.

In terms of speed, large amounts of data from high-frequency transactions make the data flow move at high speed. As a result, the time to act on the data flow becomes very short. Data is no longer collected and then sent (batch), but more is sent directly (real-time streaming). Peter J. Denning<sup>4</sup>, Director of the Cebrowski Institute for Information and Innovation and Superiority at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, CA, stated that "The Internet easily defeats advanced filters, delivering millions of words per second to brains that can process only 10 words per second".

In terms of variation or variety, data comes from different sources. Data can come from internal and external data sources. Moreover, data moves in various formats such as transactions and log data from various applications, structured data as database tables, semi-structured data such as XML data, unstructured data such as text, images, video streams, audio statements, and others. There is a shift from single structured data to increasingly unstructured data or a combination of the two.

The conditions above make changes from "regular" to "irregular" world. The world said, "Welcome to disruptive era". The era when the information—accurate or not, true or false, right or wrong—comes and comes again every second, from and to every place, in various formats, media, and contents.

Disruptive era not only gave birth to "disturbances" and changes in the business world, but also affected various aspects of life. One of the "disturbed" fields is the field of information in a form that is difficult to monitor and or control. The difficulties are mainly due to the presence of social media that inhabit cyberspace. Information disturbances including fake news are increasingly prevalent on social media because in this media, recipients can be act as senders and spreaders as well.

## 2. SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is computer-mediated technology that facilitates the generation and dissemination of information, thoughts, career interests, and statements in other forms through virtual communities and networks<sup>5</sup>. Some features of social media are as follows.

- a. Social media is interactive by using internet-based web applications<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Badan Pusat Statistik, Jakarta-Indonesia, *Proyeksi Penduduk Indonesia (Indonesia Population Projection) 2010-2035*, (Jakarta: Badan Pusat Statistik, 2013), p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> Badan Pusat Statistik, Jakarta-Indonesia, *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>3</sup> Xiaomeng Su, *Introduction to Big Data (PDF)*, (Trondheim, Gjøvik, dan Ålesund, Norwegia): Institutt for informatikk og e-læring ved NTNU: 2014), p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Thad McIlroy, (Agustus 15, 2010), *The Information Explosion (and Its Implications to the Future of Publishing)*. Retrieved February 22, 2012, from The Future of Publishing: [http://www.thefutureofpublishing.com/images/uploadimages/Information\\_Explosion-08-15-10.pdf](http://www.thefutureofpublishing.com/images/uploadimages/Information_Explosion-08-15-10.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Jonathan A. Obar and Steve Wildman, *Social Media Definition and the Governance Challenge: an Introduction to the Special Issue, Telecommunications Policy*, 39 (9), 2015, pp. 745–750.

- b. "Life blood" for social media is content that comes from users (user-generated content), such as text or comments, photos or digital videos, and data through various websites that have online interaction<sup>7</sup>.
- c. Users create their own profile on the website or application designed by social media management agencies<sup>8</sup>.
- d. Social media provides facilities for the development of online social networks by linking user profiles with profiles of other users or groups<sup>9</sup>.

Until now, Facebook (FB) is the most widely used social media. The numbers of FB accounts is 2,234 billion. The numbers of accounts does not equal the numbers of users because FB users can have multiple accounts. The numbers of FB accounts is even more than the population of the most populous country in the world, namely China in 2017 which has 1,379,302,771 people (around 1.4 billion). The following table lists data on the numbers of active accounts in social media on 30 April 2018<sup>10</sup>.

**Tabel 1. The Numbers of Active Accounts in Social Media (in Billion)  
(Sorted by the Most Number)**

Social Media	Amount	Social Media	Amount
Facebook	2.234	Reddit	0.33
YouTube	1.5	Twitter	0.33
WhatsApp	1.5	Baidu Tieba	0.3
Facebook Messenger	1.3	Skype	0.3
WeChat	0.98	Viber	0.26
Instagram	0.813	Linkedin	0.26
Tumblr	0.794	Snapchat	0.255
QQ	0.783	Line	0.203
QZone	0.563	Pinterest	0.2
Sina Weibo	0.392	Telegram	0.2

### 3. FAKE NEWS

The angler does not intend to obtain objects other than fish, neither poisonous fish. However, he could not "forbid" objects snagging in the nets stretched on both sides of the river. Likewise, in the case of news that is distributed online (even those that are distributed offline), readers cannot "prohibit" any news that comes to them. Among these news, the

<sup>6</sup> Andreas M. Kaplan and Michael Haenlein, *Users of the World, Unite! the Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media (PDF)*, *Business Horizons*, 53 (1), 2010, pp. 61.

<sup>7</sup> Jonathan A. Obar and Steve Wildman, *Op. Cit.*

<sup>8</sup> Danah M. Boyd and Nicole B. Ellison, *Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship*. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13 (1), 2007, pp. 210–230.

<sup>9</sup> Jonathan A. Obar and Steve Wildman, *Op. Cit.*

<sup>10</sup> Marlene Greenfield, (April 30, 2018). *Most Popular Social Networks Worldwide as of April 2018, Ranked by Number of Active Users (in Millions)*, Retrieved May 1, 2018, from Statista: the Statistics Portal: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/>

readers will also receive fake news, that is, news, stories, or tricks that contain inaccurate information.

Fake news is made to influence people's views, related to political, business, and chaos agendas, which benefit the newsmaker. Fake news is often distributed using names and addresses of websites that are similar to sites owned by prominent news organizations. Not only that, fake news even is also published by these leading news sites.

Fake news is also called junk news, pseudo-news, or hoax news spreading on traditional (printed) and or digital media<sup>11</sup>. Fake news is not something that has just appeared in the current era. Fake news even existed before the prophet Isa, Peace Be Upon Him, was born. At that time, a pharaoh (Egyptian king) named Ramesses the Great stated that he and his army won a resounding victory in battle in an area called Kadesh. The statement also comes with a story about him how valiant he was when struck the enemy. Even though the statement was a lie because in the actual battle no one lost or won. This fake news was spread by the pharaoh in the 13th century BC<sup>12</sup>.

Another fake news befell to Mark Antony and one of the news inflicted a tragedy. There was Emperor Augustus (born Gaius Octavius) who carried out a black campaign against Mark Antony, his political rival in the first century BC. In the campaign, Augustus stated Mark Antony in the first fake news a drunkard, often disguised as a woman, and a mere puppet of Cleopatra VII, Queen of Egypt<sup>13</sup>. The second fake news was almost similar to the story of Romeo and Juliet. Cleopatra, the Queen, shared the information herself that she had done suicide, but actually she had not. When heard such information, Mark Antony who had lost in the battle of Actium committed the real suicide<sup>14</sup>.

Fake news hit almost all countries in the world, including Indonesia. In Indonesia, fake news is rife especially when there are political events, such as presidential elections. Fake news circulating generally accuses a candidate of having a relationship with the issues about communism, a certain country, or a certain religion. The accusation was packaged in the form of "essay" news that was believed to make people not support a candidate<sup>15</sup>. Indonesian people generally do not like the figures associated with these issues.

In addition, fake news is also circulated with the aim of financial gain in business. One form of such fake news is to create a sensational and misleading title (for instance, "clickbait"). In social media, this type of fake news spread quickly by only displaying titles and a small piece of the articles that make social media users interested in clicking and not rarely share them. In the current situation, the ethics of journalism is often defeated by the interests of capitalism.

Usually, more accurate news comes from journalistic sources that are required to follow certain standards. However, nowadays, anyone can be a writer or at least be a fake news disseminator. The existence of social media that is not so strict in applying editorial standards make all of those fake news easy to produce and to share.

<sup>11</sup> Devin Bartolotta, (December 9, 2016), *Hillary Clinton Warns About Hoax News On Social Media*, Retrieved October 1, 2019, from WJZ, CBS Baltimore. <https://baltimore.cbslocal.com/2016/12/09/hillary-clinton-warns-about-hoax-news-on-social-media/>

<sup>12</sup> William Weir, *History's Greatest Lies: the Startling Truths Behind World Events Our History Books Got Wrong*, (Beverly, Massachusetts: Fair Winds Press, 2009), pp. 28-41.

<sup>13</sup> Izabella Kaminska, (January 17, 2017), *A Lesson in Fake News from the Info-wars of Ancient Rome*, Retrieved September 30, 2019 from Financial Times: <https://www.ft.com/content/aaf2bb08-dca2-11e6-86ac-f253db7791c6>

<sup>14</sup> *Biography.com, Marc Antony and Cleopatra*, Retrieved September 4, 2019 from A&E Television Networks: <https://www.biography.com/news/cleopatra-mark-antony-love-story-death>

<sup>15</sup> Yenni Kwok, (January 6, 2017), *Where Memes Could Kill: Indonesia's Worsening Problem of Fake News*, Retrieved September 28, 2019 from Time: <https://time.com/4620419/indonesia-fake-news-ahok-chinese-christian-islam/>

Actually, the recipients and readers of the fake news are difficult to declare whether the news genuine or fake. The flood of information and the lack of understanding of how the internet works make fake news finding fertile soil for breeding. Not a few people (in Indonesia) become very trusting about the information because it is displayed on the internet. Many people still believe that the internet (as well as computers) cannot be wrong, even though in reality it is not like that.

There are still many people who only read the title, without reading the whole story. Likewise, people share a message if the news content is in accordance with their political, religious, ethnic, and interests, as soon as possible. The suitability becomes the impetus for these people to trust the news content immediately. Fake news is even used as a marker for someone to show their identity by sharing it.

#### 4. THE ROLE OF LIBRARIAN

The habit of reading some Indonesian people who are incorrect, such as only reading the title, not seeing the author or the date of the news, and uncritical attitude towards the news is quite surprising considering that 87% of Indonesia's population adheres to Islam. In Islam, following the opinions of others without knowing the source or reason underlying that opinion (*taklid*) includes prohibited behavior. The Islamic holy book even clearly states:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا  
أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْبِحُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ

“O you who have believed, if there comes to you a disobedient one with information, **investigate**, lest you harm a people out of ignorance and become, over what you have done, regretful” (al-Quran, surah al-Hujurat:6).

It should be suspected, improper habits are not due to religious issues, but the problem of knowing or not. The problem is about the lack of insight. Moreover, the main problem is the lack of insight in terms of sorting out accurate information and using information correctly. Both of these are the part of information literacy. Then, how do you make those "poisonous fish eaters" know?

The Law Number 43 Year 2007 concerning Libraries, Article 2 states that libraries are held based on the principles of lifelong learning, democracy, justice, professionalism, openness, measurement, and partnership. In Article 3 it is also stated that the library function to as a medium for education, research, preservation, information, and recreation to improve the intelligence and empowerment the nation's life. It can be concluded, that the improvement listed in the 1945 Constitution is also the library (and librarians') responsibility to carry it out. Then, the libraries and the librarians are responsible for keep up the ability (at least) of library users in terms of information literacy.

During this time, librarians often do promotions with the aim of increasing the numbers of library visitors. However, in the current situation, promotion orientation needs to be added (if not changed) with to campaign about information literacy. For this reason, libraries are not only visited, but librarians visit its users to campaign. Of course, the visit does not have to be done physically, but in other various ways, for example by using the media, including the internet.

Campaigns can be conducted inside or outside of the library, for example by making posters about information literacy posted on library walls. Information literacy campaigns can also be carried out by utilizing banner placed in strategic locations within the parent institution. Information literacy campaigns also have the opportunity to be done through social media, such as FB, Instagram, or Twitter. The point of all is the librarian urges the

library users to improve their information literacy ability or, at least, to invite the users not to believe in the information they received immediately. At the same time, users are told about how to distinguish accurate and inaccurate (fake) information. By using social media campaigns will soon spread in a short time because, for example, the numbers of FB's users. The results of the Indonesian Internet Service Association (APJII) survey in 2016 shows that FB is a social media that is visited by 54% or 71.6 million Indonesian people<sup>16</sup>.

The criteria for fake news (information) or not can be obtained by adopting eight points published by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). By these points, librarians can assist people in recognizing fake news<sup>17</sup>. The eight points are:

- a. consider the source (to understand its mission and purpose),
- b. read beyond the headline (to understand the whole story),
- c. check the authors (to see if they are real and credible),
- d. assess the supporting sources (to ensure they support the claims),
- e. check the date of publication (to see if the story is relevant and up to date),
- f. ask if it is a joke (to determine if it is meant to be satire),
- g. review your own biases (to see if they are affecting your judgment), and
- h. ask experts (to get confirmation from independent people with knowledge).

Above all, the library need to switch images and collections from "printed" to "digital". Digital library material is inevitability to be collected and managed by the library. The switching covers various aspects, including (1) improving the ability of librarians in processing digital library materials, (2) improving the ability of librarians in English, (3) the using of the Resource and Data Access [RDA], (4) the addition of special courses on information literacy and digitalization in library schools, (5) designing web and android based application. This switching is needed so that the library can compete with virtual information centers, such as Kindle and Google. By the switching, the library can gain the trust of (potential) users that the information stored and disseminated is similar but has advantages over the property of information centers or virtual sites. The advantage is that in terms of accuracy because librarians have clear standards as a center (source) of information.

The library also need to "reformulate" the definition of the library itself. The definition, that the library is a "building" maybe has reach the time to be transformed into a library is a "place", both real and virtual. The mission of the library is more to educate its users, in addition to the use of its collections. Finally, it is necessary to be kept in mind that the fish poison turn out to be quite venomous and can cause unexpected risks.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The explosion of information makes the recipient flooded with information. The main cause of the explosion of information is the internet. Unfortunately, the accuracy of the information received is uncertain. The world also faces an uncertain situation which is commonly called the disruptive era. In this era, controlling information is almost impossible. Among that obscurity, fake news born massively, especially on social media.

The interactive nature of social media causes the originator and disseminator of the information multiply in number. That number is becoming increasingly larger and larger

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<sup>16</sup> Perpustakaan Universitas Mercu Buana Yogyakarta, (March 26, 2019), Strategi Mengidentifikasi Berita Palsu atau Hoax, Perpustakaan, Retrieved September 28, 2019 from Universitas Mercu Buana Yogyakarta: <http://perpus.mercubuana-yogya.ac.id/2019/03/26/starategi-mengidentifikasi-berita-palsu-atau-hoax/>

<sup>17</sup> IFLA, (January 27, 2017), *How to Spot Fake News*, Retrieved February 16, 2019 from IFLA blogs: <https://www.ifla.org/publications/node/11174>

because social media is used by a large number of users from all over the world, from all groups of religious, ages, occupations, and so on. As a result, fake news is also increasingly unstoppable.

Fake news is like poison which can even pose an unlimited risk. Fake news that actually existed before the prophet Isa, Peace Be Upon Him, was born, can damage the nation, including the Indonesian people. However, because of the difficulty in stemming the circulation of fake news, the easiest way is fortifying the recipients with information literacy ability.

In terms of information literacy, the library can play a role to educate the nation's life. In order to carry out this role, libraries and librarians need to change themselves by following the development of information technology. Along with that, libraries need to change the paradigm of not only managing and disseminating information, but also educating its users.

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