Evidence Based Library and Information Practice

Evidence Summary

New Information Literacy Model for Identifying Mis/Disinformation Falls Short of Determining and Addressing a Need

A Review of:
John, K., & Tater, B. (2025). Reframing the information literacy framework to identify misinformation and disinformation. *Serials Librarian*, *86(1/2)*, 29–55.
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Abstract

Objective – To determine the information literacy skills needed for identifying misinformation and disinformation, examine current information literacy models' incorporation of those skills, and propose a new information literacy model to address those skills.

Design – Analysis of published literature.

Setting – Publications on misinformation and disinformation and information literacy.

Subjects – Information literacy models.

Methods – Google Scholar was used to locate 1,378 peer-reviewed articles addressing topics related to the current study. Of these, 175 papers were selected for analysis and categorized into the following areas: misinformation and disinformation, causes of misinformation and disinformation, types of misinformation and disinformation, identification of misinformation and disinformation, library and

information services, information literacy, misinformation and disinformation and information literacy, information literacy models and misinformation. Content from the studies was synthesized into a discussion and used to create a new information literacy model to address misinformation and disinformation.

Main Results – The authors assert that misinformation and disinformation pose a substantial problem and that current information literacy models do not adequately underscore elements that lead to the identification of misinformation and disinformation. They point to plagiarism and poor research design as evidence that existing models are unable to assist in substantiating information. Recommendations for an information literacy model include promoting thorough analysis, emphasizing accuracy, educating users about determining the purpose of information, and integrating information and communication technology skills. Additionally, the authors propose an information literacy model that lists components of information literacy, information literacy skills, and elements of misinformation and disinformation.

Conclusion – The authors suggest that their review of relevant literature shows that existing information literacy models do not facilitate the identification of misinformation and disinformation. Furthermore, the authors believe that this weakness, coupled with changes to the online information environment, necessitates an information literacy model to assist users in identifying misinformation and disinformation. Their proposed information literacy model includes elements that they believe support this need.

Commentary

Information literacy models offer a conceptual view of how users understand and interact with information, providing guidance for students and instructors. Misinformation and disinformation continue to proliferate, requiring evolving research methods to understand its nature. Instructional librarians have adapted teaching strategies to assist users with increasingly complex resource evaluation (Amriza et al., 2025; Willenborg & Detmering, 2025). The current study seeks to determine whether existing information literacy models support the identification of misinformation and disinformation and propose a model to describe how users might correctly perform that task (John & Tater, 2025).

This evidence summary utilizes "The CAT: A Generic Critical Appraisal Tool" to assess the quality of the current study, revealing notable strengths and weaknesses (Perryman & Rathbun-Grubb, 2014). The study fulfills The CAT's appraisal guideline to provide a clear description of the study's necessity and aims, positioning information literacy as an appropriate strategy for dismantling misinformation. The study also includes a large, multidisciplinary literature review that allows the authors to grapple with defining misinformation and information literacy skills.

However, the study's lack of transparency regarding published literature and the disorganized discussion leave The CAT's questions about analysis methods and reasoning unfulfilled. Readers are given few details about how the "meticulous qualitative analysis, meeting stringent criteria" (p. 39) was carried out, only that it was "inductive" (p. 32) and that searches were conducted solely through Google Scholar. Neither reasoning nor definitions are given for the categorization used in the literature review. The authors claim that the review was systematic (p.33, Table 1) while using Onwuegbuzie and Frels' (2016) guidelines for comprehensive reviews, rather than established reporting guidelines meant for systematic reviews. The discussion of findings is unorganized and does not provide a clear account of themes, complicating readers' understanding of how the synthesis informs the current study's conclusions.

The authors posit that current information literacy models are insufficient for detecting misinformation and disinformation because they do not focus on evaluation factors. However, many information models include evaluation components that are intended to be useful for varied tasks, sometimes even distinctly addressing misinformation (CILIP, 2018; Herring, 2004; SCONUL, 2012). The current study does not provide direct evidence of existing models' shortcomings. Furthermore, the authors' proposed model could benefit from clearer explanations about what users should comprehend and be able to do when they encounter problematic information.

While John and Tater's approach to the information literacy model is flawed, their presupposition that users and librarians could benefit from a new model that places importance on the critical evaluation of resources in an increasingly untrustworthy information environment may still be correct. A practice-oriented study that better delineates the intellectual dispositions and abilities necessary to working with information in this setting could yield a timely and effective model. Assessing and describing specific shortcomings of existing misinformation and disinformation models would provide the model with a well-researched foundation.

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