



INFORMATION SEEKING IN KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY: CHOOSE RIGHT FROM WRONG



Zaiton Hassan¹

 Norhayati Hussin²⁺

Hasnah Hashim³

Nurul Syfa' Mohd

Tokiran⁴

^{1,2,3,4}Faculty of Information Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA
Cawangan Selangor Kampus Puncak Perdana, Shah Alam, Malaysia.
²Email: yatihussin@uitm.edu.my Tel: (+60196688179)



(+ Corresponding author)

ABSTRACT

Article History

Received: 18 November 2019

Revised: 24 December 2019

Accepted: 27 January 2020

Published: 16 March 2020

Keywords

Information management

Knowledge society

Information professional

Digital library

Media

Information literacy.

In the era of born-digital, most of us nowadays always looking for the fastest way in the information-seeking process. The society has widely used the usage of internet as the information-seeking tools. However, the credibility of information vague without unknown information on the sources of that information. This paper will discuss how the knowledge society deals with the rapid changes in information and the information-seeking process. This paper also discusses the importance of being information literate and the importance of Media and Information Literacy skills to be adapted in the society as well as the discussion regarding the role of the information professional as a gatekeeper to the knowledge society and the importance of digital libraries in providing the right information for the society. Library and information professional is a key player to deliver the right and trusted information to the society and society can contribute towards developing the information society within their community.

Contribution/ Originality: This study contributes to the existing literature on how the ways society views online information in a different dimension. It is important to evaluate and judge the quality of information content and the criteria of online information on the web.

1. INTRODUCTION

Information from early times has always been available on paper or orally passed. Information on paper is compartmentalised in terms of information technology. When it comes on how to find the information needed is meaning to find the right book or publication. And then books will give a complete or less picture, and any related links to other work are available for reference purposes. This situation is different from the information on the internet, which is naturally hyperlinked. Moreover, information is easily been created, disseminate and shared within the society (Suhaimi & Hussin, 2017). To find information on the internet is an easy thing to do, but the big challenge is how to filter the relevant information needed. Not only on the internet, but the evaluation of information credibility on social media also has become important issues, especially for the user (Li & Suh, 2015). Statista Research Department (2019) reveal 73.8% internet user in Malaysia share information through social media and follow by group messaging (70.6%) and private messaging (46.6%). The amount of information stored on the internet is enormous, and it is critical to share this information between groups and individual through open access to this knowledge. Nevertheless, it is not only about sharing knowledge because it only becomes useful when

society can differentiate between less relevant and relevant information. The analogy is simple as when we can discuss aspects of the knowledge or information; we can improve and create new ideas which will benefit society.

In the era of globalisation and knowledge society, Google search has been the highest-ranking in the usage of the information-seeking process. With more than 5 million results in less than one second in searching for the information, it is hard to tell whether this is the right information or wrong. With this enormous information available on the internet, the main challenge for society is how to set apart the speculations versus valuable information such as researchers from attention seekers or scholars from bloggers. Meanwhile, with all information overloads that happened today, it may give impact to the society if the situation not be handled wisely either from government or the organisation through their Community Service Responsibility (CSR) initiative. Nevertheless, the effort only can be made with the support of the society themselves because not all knowledge is institutionalised, especially in rising subjects that are related to digital industries such as mobile development, online and web communication and social media. There is something that called grey areas in this subject, and it is the under the responsibility of someone who called information professional to play a role to treat them accordingly. Information professional has a crucial and significant role to recognize the way to seeking and recognized value of information in assist and help modern society to use appropriately. According to [Paliwal, Bhardwaj, and Sharma \(2016\)](#) mention information is valuable and should properly use by modern society. However, the modern society has limited knowledge to judge the information either it is right or wrong. This has been supported by [Robins, Holmes, and Stansbury \(2010\)](#) that state the rapid changes in the web has made the judgment and evaluation on information among society is crucial task especially the wrong information already been post in the web. That online information does not have criteria to become right information because elements such credibility of author is unclear. Moreover, the scholar state that is necessary to develop new information skills to cope with digital information problem ([Keshavarz, 2014](#)). So, the new skill like information literate is important to the society towards became knowledgeable society in the future. In fulfill this gap, this paper will discuss on how modern society deal with rapid changes of information as well as the importance of modern society to own ability to become information literate. Moreover, the roles of information professional and digital libraries are importance to educate society to become information literate is also discussed in the article. This study will contribute the ways society view the online information in different dimension. This is because the information not only the content itself however the quality and criteria of online information or data in the web also important and required to evaluate and judge. The different dimension in seeking and searching information will be discussed as well as other platform that suitable to learning and teaching using those material that can gain without cost and can be distribute.

2. OPEN DATA AND KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

According to [Encyclopedia \(2019\)](#) knowledge society has been defined as creation, dissemination and utilization of information and knowledge has become the most important factor of production. Many of us cannot differentiate between knowledge society and information society. Information society circulates information with selected economic, social networks and political and has a more limited social agenda of inclusion ([Wessels, 2010; Wessels et al., 2017](#)). Meanwhile, knowledge society refer on the understanding how data integrated within society and how society has been view as learning phenomena ([Wessels et al., 2017](#)) whereby the data has been transforming into resources that allow the society to take effective action in creating a genuinely participative society.

Nevertheless, the main issue here is how this society deals with the enormous number of information on the internet in the information-seeking process. Some author believes in the modern environment, and the society should increase their set of competencies for information finding, handling and use ([Virkus, 2011](#)). With the rising of open data and big data, it is automatically ensuring an open data movement that creates an open knowledge society. Open data, open standards, open sources software and open content, is the basic foundations that have been used by an open knowledge society. The existence of Wikipedia encyclopedia or the Linux operating systems is the

example of digital commons that have been developed through public collaboration in open knowledge society. Furthermore, there is a practice in open knowledge society to be technologically neutral and freedom either individuals or organisation in choosing the most suitable and appropriate standard, technology or content for building their initiatives. These also allow individuals or organisations to improve their societies to avoid dependency. The society should have competencies in finding, handling and use of information especially for open data and big data. The information literacy competencies are the clear solution to deal with the rapid changes and enormous number of information especially in the internet. Anunobi (2014) state information literacy competencies has been defined as the collection of knowledge, skill and attitude in identifying the when and why information is required, how to use, manage and apply it, synthesizing, use and communicate legally and ethically. The society should know the purpose the information in open data necessary to used it. The ability to plan, gather, evaluate, manage and present data is necessary to know the right and wrong information especially in internet. Information literacy competencies can produce the society that is not only knowledgeable but the right attitudes in finding, handling and use of information is essential to deal with this issues.

3. INFORMATION SEEKING VIA WORLDWIDE WEB

Michael, Makarfi, Goshie, and Jimada (2014) state information seeking is a process or activity in seek in getting the information in both human and technology context. The ability in search and seek information is essential element for the modern society. Online information is important for the student, academician as well as researcher. Most of us either who are involved in doing academic or professional research may have the possibility to start their research with the Google search as their first step. Google search is one of platform in finding the information, however some information provide by Google search can lead towards lack credibility of information. The information should fulfill the criteria of online information credibility such as trustworthiness, truthfulness, accuracy, completeness, reliability, and currency (Rieh, 2016). This is because without those components, the value of information to use by society is vague. Meanwhile, in the context of an open knowledge society, information seeking for educational purposes is different from self-education that can be considered as a fast-spreading trend. Now, academic lives in the new world because using the internet to support learning and teaching is growth exponentially (Michael et al., 2014). With the era of born-digital, the process of information searching no longer starts in a library but it begins in front of a computer or other gadgets such as smartphone, tablet or laptop where the user will use the Google search by typing a few keywords, and then presses enter and then he or she will scan the results that may contain from various format from journals, blogs, magazines, lectures and even books. A person may get what he or she wants but the percentage to get the irrelevant information is also high if he or she did not have the skill to filter the relevant information for the right purpose. Another question that arises from this situation, especially in the education field, is how effective the distribution of digitised learning material online without the participation of the lecturers or professors who the person that responsible in developing that learning material may lead the educational processes to become chaotic because of there is no direct, guiding and leadership.

However, these issues will be overcome if there is the authority or educational institution monitor those learning materials online for better use towards producing the right information to society. UNESCO recommended open Educational Resources (OER) in 2019. OER is a platform for learning, teaching and research material that been produced in any medium and format that has been released under an open license that can re-use, no cost and also can be redistributed by others (UNESCO, 2019). This platform will assist open knowledge society to assess on the reliable platform in learning the right information online. Moreover, this platform will support Sustainable Development Goals for goal number 4 for quality education (United Nation, 2019). OER is important for them to learn and practices within society for seeking the right and appropriate information as well as receive proper education online. This is to encourage the implementation of OER by installing digital culture among the

community. Some society still digital illiterate so when the culture on the use of digital technology been instilled, the education online by using OER platform will be increased in the future.

4. CHOOSING RIGHT FROM WRONG

In an open knowledge society, digital research stills a challenging adventure, even though seeking information online is already a common practice. The main problem that always by the users when searching for information on the World Wide Web is we don't know the trustworthiness of the information that has been accessed from the beginning. The credibility of information is a complicated concept that is often defined concerning multiple constructs, such as trustworthiness, truthfulness, accuracy, completeness, reliability, and currency (e.g., (Rieh, 2016; Rieh, Kim, Yang, & St. Jean, 2010)). There is no one to guide you in the information-seeking process and not to mention counseling and professional guidance. In short, the user is on their own, and it is not easy to differentiate and recognise quality information from a bad one. In becoming the information literate, the society should learn on how to assess on the credibility of online information sources, understand the creation and distribution process of online information that depend on different objectives as well as the value of that information (American Library Association, 2016). From the perspective of information professionals, these maybe not a big problem for them since there is a list of criteria that help in choosing right from wrong as far as information is concerned such as the authorship, publisher, accuracy, completeness, consistency, uniqueness, and timeliness.

Nevertheless, in the Malaysia context, the government gives full support in educating the society to become information literate through Media and Information Literacy Programmes that have been done by library institutions nationwide. One of the programs organised by the National Library of Malaysia to promote information literacy is In4Skill program among rural communities in Malaysia (IFLA, 2019). There is seven component in instilling information literacy among the rural community through In4Skill programs such as information literacy, information needs, information seeking, evaluation of information, organising of information, ethical use of information and disseminate of information. This program will assist the Malaysian communities towards increasing the information literacy especially for the rural community. Moreover, this program will close knowledge gaps between the rural and urban community in Malaysia because it provides a solution to prevent communities towards information illiterate among society. In addition, the role of information professionals such as librarian as well as the digital library will be recognised mainly by a rural community in Malaysia because organised this program to the society.

5. MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY

According to International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) (2012) media and information literacy (MIL) is defined as a combination of knowledge, attitudes, skills, and practices required to access, analyse, evaluate, use, produce, and communicate information and knowledge in creative, legal and ethical ways that respect human rights. The declaration also stated that media and information literate individuals could use diverse media, information sources and channels in their private, professional and public lives. In other hand, the society know when and what information they need and what for, and where and how to obtain it; they understand who has created that information and why, as well as the roles, responsibilities and functions of media, information providers and memory institutions; they can analyze information, messages, beliefs and values conveyed through the media and any content producers, and can validate information they have found and produced against a range of generic, personal and context-based criteria. The declaration also stressed that MIL competencies thus extend beyond information and communication technologies to encompass learning, critical thinking and interpretive skills across and beyond professional, educational and societal boundaries and MIL addresses all types of media (oral, print, analogue and digital) and all forms and formats of resources. Furthermore, the rapid growth in information and the changing media landscape are affecting individuals and societies now more

than ever. In order to ensure the knowledge society to succeed in this kind of environment as well as to resolve the problems effectively, a critical set of competencies should be obtained in every facet of life, communities, individuals and nations so that they are able to seek, critically evaluate and create new information and knowledge in different forms by sharing these through various channels using existing tools. According to International Federal Library Association (IFLA) (2012), MIL will create a new opportunity that can enhance and improve quality of life but individuals, organizations, and societies have to address existing and emerging barriers and challenges to the free and effective use of information, including, but not exhausted by, the following:

- Limited capacities, resources and infrastructure.
- Censorship, limited information in the public domain, commercialisation, privatisation, and monopolisation of information.
- Lack of respect for cultural and linguistic diversity.
- Excessive and inappropriate legal barriers to accessing, distributing and owning information.
- Lack of awareness of long-term preservation of information, particularly personal digital information.
- Lack of cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary collaboration among stakeholders (between librarians and media educators, between mass media outfits and academic organisations, etc.).

The society will overcome the challenges that mention above when they receive and own media and information literacy capability. The ability receive knowledge, attitudes, skills, and practices required to access, analyse, evaluate, use, produce, and communicate information and knowledge creation, legally and ethically should posses by information and knowledge society for them judge on wrong and right information. According to [Salim, Mahmood, and Ahmad \(2018\)](#) a new adaption of information literacy should implement and develop in curriculum structure and those process should be continuously improved to support the learning process. The young generation will possess those criteria when information literacy embeds in the curriculum structure. This is because the young generation will become future knowledge society that will bring the nation forward. When teacher and parents educate the young age consequently the society will become information literate.

6. DIGITAL LIBRARY AND THE ROLE OF INFORMATION PROFESSIONAL

The rapid development of the digital era has contributed to the transformation of traditional libraries toward digital libraries. Digital libraries can also be defined as virtual libraries, electronic libraries and libraries without walls. According to [Mishra \(2016\)](#) the digital library has been defined as a collection of services, collection of an information object, supporting the user with information object, organisation and preservation of those object, availability in directly and indirectly and electronic/digitally availability. Digital libraries play an important role in identifying the effectiveness of information repositories to support the need for information. According to [Islam and Ikeda \(2014\)](#) digital libraries are increasingly developing worldwide because of its functionality that can be accessed everywhere at any time, access to information more widely, sharing information more easily, various of quality information, time savings, reduce human resources, new trends in information seeking and improve information security. Fulfil the need for modern societies, and digital libraries are becoming the most important and influential institutions in each country. “There is no doubt that in some real sense, the world has changed ([Crowley, 2012](#)). Traditionally, librarians have always provided individuals with information access and organisation. Now that vast stores of information are available in many forms and can be delivered directly into offices, homes, and handheld devices, librarianship is, in many ways, being transformed. The Internet has affected how information is delivered both inside and outside the library. People’s expectations about the knowledge and skills required to locate information have dramatically changed. Many people believe that they need access to an Internet connection and a Web browser—no human intermediary needed, and certainly not a librarian.” ([Crowley, 2012](#)). The challenge should through by librarians is to learn a new skill for implement the latest technologies especially for learning, research and information for their patrons ([Wenborn, 2018](#)). The existence of a digital library can seem as the

guardian for the society in the information-seeking process. In short, the digital library is more needed than ever as professional and trustworthy help to finding, selecting and understanding the vast information that the internet provides and just as a depository. In other words, if we take into consideration the amount of low-quality content and fake news one can find while surfing the internet, the user's need that justified librarians' mission - that to be counselled and guided- is still there, maybe stronger than ever (Wessels et al., 2017). With this statement, then we can easily understand the reason for the establishment and existence of digital or virtual libraries becomes extremely important in the knowledge society. It is not only about giving access to open data and online journals but also to offer a satisfying and complete virtual experience to its users. To be a competitor to a Google search, there are a lot of things that need to be considered by a digital library. According to Sîrb (2017) the digital library is an interactive system that modulates and affect its appearance together with the user behaviour and actions in those platforms. Sîrb also stressed that a digital library must be user-centred, not content-centred. The content only can be considered valuable only as long as it serves the user's needs.

"The increasing amount of information available to users and how it can be accessed has, in theory, making it easier for users to get the information they require. However, in practice, there is now a danger that they can be overwhelmed by the amount of information they receive making it difficult to locate the exact information they seek as well as overseeing issues of accuracy and authenticity. The role of librarians and information professionals as both user-educator and intermediary is prevalent in this environment. The basic of librarianship is include skills such as user education are relevant in this era as they are in print-based one and will continue to provide a solid base of skills" (Hashim & Mokhtar, 2012). Information seeking via digital libraries is different compared with Google search. In digital libraries, information seeking should be sustained by keywords, categories, personalised suggestions and filters, based on previous searches that have been made by the same user or other similar searches by other users'. As stated before, the role of information professionals or librarians that can be considered as the everlasting role is that professional guiding and counselling and this challenging mission must be brought into the digital library. In short, his virtual presence must compensate the same as a physical absence.

All these efforts to strengthening the function of digital libraries, especially in information seeking process in knowledge society should be supported by a consistent promotion and awareness of the importance of digital libraries to the society. If we look at the transformation that has been made by Google with the existing of Google Scholar that target the researcher especially in the academic field, the digital libraries need to move fast ten steps ahead to ensure they can compete with their competitor and at the same time act as a gatekeeper to the knowledge society. The library professionals should be proactive in working with research scholars to develop virtual training program aimed at enabling them to use e-resources more effectively.

7. GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE

The initiative in educating society to choose the right from wrong has been fully supporting by the government of Malaysia. It is the inspires of the Malaysian government to make it mandatory for its people to have the problem-solving skill and be information literate so they can be productive in developing the country's economy and the aspiration to be a knowledge-based society. One big challenge that remains until now is to create a knowledge society that is fully able to adapt, innovate and invent to become a scientific and progressive society. Without the ability to find, evaluate and use the information effectively, the vision 2020 cannot be achieved. According to this statement, it has become a key role for the information professional, especially the librarians and the libraries in helping the society to become information literate for the sustainable advancement in the country.

Apart from the MIL Workshops that have been done by library institutions nationwide that cover all levels of participants from primary and secondary school, higher education institutions, communities, and government and private staff, the establishment of digital libraries also play an important role (Kaur, 2015) in guiding the information seeking process in the knowledge society throughout the country. Nevertheless, all these efforts by the

government need strong support by the information professionals to ensure the knowledge society in this country has the skill in information seeking a process that will enable them to give benefit to the future nation.

8. CONCLUSION

Whether we like it or not, people will go on seeking information on the web. It is as natural as every morning routine by checking the inbox at work or searching for a long lost friend on Facebook rather than in the phone book. There is no going back regarding the long life connection between information seeking and the World Wide Web. It is the right time for the libraries to keep up with their users that already changed behaviour and find their place in the information-saturated and fast-moving digital world. To ensure that the library institutions can preserve their crucial role in knowledge creation and distribution, few important points can be considered to be followed; understand and learn the user's needs, behaviour and expectations; build a user-centred experience; offer a great and wholesome virtual experience and embrace non-academic but valuable professional information from underground field of knowledge. The challenges regarding the process of evolving towards an open knowledge society that we are facing will be ongoing. It is natural to happen this way since they keep changing at the same pace as the revolution of information technology. The important things to be done by the information professional especially librarians is not try to solve them all but to equip oneself with a mindset that the information creation and sharing are free, open processes and it is not endangering progress where open knowledge facilitates and act solely in this spirit.

Funding: This paper is funded by DUCS Grant, IRMI Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Selangor. Reference No: UITMSEL (P1 5/4) (005/2018).

Competing Interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Acknowledgement: All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study.

REFERENCES

- American Library Association. (2016). *Framework for information literacy for higher education*. Chicago: American Library Association.
- Anunobi, C. (2014). Information literacy competencies: A conceptual analysis. *Journal of Applied Information Science and Technology*, 7(2), 64-80.
- Crowley, B. (2012). *Defending professionalism: A resource for librarians, information specialists, knowledge managers, and archivists*. California: Libraries Unlimited.
- Encyclopedia. (2019). Knowledge society. Cengage. Retrieved from <https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences/applied-and-social-sciences-magazines/knowledge-society>.
- Hashim, B. L., & Mokhtar, W. (2012). Preparing new era librarians and information professionals: Trends and issues. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2(7), 151-155.
- IFLA. (2019). Media and information literacy for all: Libraries and the 2019 global MIL week. Retrieved from <https://blogs.ifla.org/faife/2019/10/24/167/>.
- International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). (2012). Moscow declaration on media and information literacy. Retrieved from <https://www.ifla.org/publications/moscow-declaration-on-media-and-information-literacy>.
- Islam, M. A., & Ikeda, M. (2014). Convergence issues of knowledge management in digital libraries: Steps towards state-of-the-art digital libraries. *The Journal of Information and Knowledge Management Systems*, 44(1), 140-159. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1108/vine-05-2013-0029>.
- Kaur, H. (2015). Role of digital libraries in the present Era: Challenges and issues. In S.Thanuskodi (Ed), *Handbook of Research on Inventive Digital Tools for Collection Management and Development in Modern Libraries* (pp. 86-102). Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

- Keshavarz, H. (2014). How credible is information on the Web: Reflections on misinformation and disinformation. *Infopreneurship Journal*, 1(2), 1-17.
- Li, R., & Suh, A. (2015). Factors influencing information credibility on social media platforms: Evidence from Facebook pages. *Procedia Computer Science*, 72(1), 314-328. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procs.2015.12.146>.
- Michael, E., Makarfi, A., Goshie, R. W., & Jimada, A. (2014). An overview of Users information seeking behaviour on online resources. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 19(1), 9-17.
- Mishra, R. K. (2016). Digital libraries: Definitions, issues, and challenges. *Innovare Journal of Education*, 4(3), 1-13.
- Paliwal, S., Bhardwaj, M., & Sharma, S. (2016). Information needs and information seeking behaviour of faculty members of science & technology, G.B. Nagar District: A study. *International Journal of Research in Library Science*, 2(1), 63-78.
- Rieh, S. Y. (2016). Credibility assessment of online information in context. *Journal of Information Science Theory and Practice*, 2(3), 6-17.
- Rieh, S. Y., Kim, Y. M., Yang, J. Y., & St. Jean, B. (2010). *A diary study of credibility assessment in everyday life information activities on the Web: Preliminary findings*. Paper presented at the 73rd Annual Meeting of the American Society for Information Science and Technology.
- Robins, D., Holmes, J., & Stansbury, M. (2010). Consumer health information on the Web: The relationship of visual design and perceptions of credibility. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 61(1), 13-29. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.21224>.
- Salim, S. F. M. Y. S., Mahmood, M. F., & Ahmad, A. B. (2018). The importance of information literacy to support lifelong learning in convergence Era. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 7(3), 352-362.
- Sirb, C. (2017). *The role of libraries in the open knowledge society*. Paper presented at the Latin America and Caribbean Section - Satellite Meeting Libraries and the 2030 Agenda: Prospective Information and Forthcoming Society? Timisoara, Romania – August 15-16, 2017.
- Statista Research Department. (2019). Online content sharing in Malaysia as of August 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/981291/malaysia-online-content-sharing-by-platform/>.
- Suhaimi, F. A. B., & Hussin, N. B. (2017). The influence of information overload on students' academic performance. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 7(8), 2222-6990. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v7-i8/3292>.
- UNESCO. (2019). UNESCO recommendation on open educational resources. Retrieved from <https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-recommendation-open-educational-resources-oer>.
- United Nation. (2019). Sustainable development goals. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>.
- Virkus, S. (2011). Information literacy as an important competency for the 21st century: Conceptual approaches. *Journal of the Bangladesh Association of Young Researchers*, 1(2), 15-29. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3329/jbayr.v1i2.10028>.
- Wenborn, C. (2018). *How technologies is changing the future of libraries*: Library Service Wiley.
- Wessels, B. (2010). *Understanding the internet: A socio-cultural perspective*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Wessels, B., Finn, R. L., Wadhwa, K., Sveinsdottir, T., Bigagli, L., Nativi, S., & Noorman, M. (2017). *Open data and the knowledge society*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Views and opinions expressed in this article are the views and opinions of the author(s), International Journal of Asian Social Science shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability etc. caused in relation to/arising out of the use of the content.