ATG Special Report-The Charlotte Initiative E-Book Symposium

Rebecca Lenzini
The Charleston Company, rlenzini@charlestonco.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg
Part of the Library and Information Science Commons

Recommended Citation
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.7882

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.
a student was researching the impact of liberalizing marijuana policies. Passionately pro-legalization, he claimed that a massive increase in marijuana use would have no negative health effects. None of the sources he had consulted were fake in the way we understand the term today. But by drawing on small, incomplete, or badly designed pro-legalization studies and ignoring several larger and more carefully controlled cautionary studies, he’d reinforced his false belief that there were no risks to public health of making marijuana widely available.

The point I am trying to drive home here is our students’ biggest problem isn’t that they occasionally mistake fake news for real news. It’s that they so often use all types of news to reinforce their existing beliefs. No doubt they’ve always been selective in what they read and watch, but, in an era where social media and customized alerts have largely replaced national and regional news, many students curate their news sources to such an extent that they expose themselves only to news that reinforces their beliefs. As a result, these beliefs persist largely unchallenged — and many of the false ones go uncorrected.

In treating the uncritical consumption of fake news as a symptom of the more fundamental problem of excessive curation, I am suggesting that the market for fake news is shaped less by the opportunism of fundamental problem of excessive curation, we’ve seen students misusing sources for years; we’ve read dozens of student papers where sources have been co-opted to validate beliefs that fly in the face of the scientific consensus; and, above all, we’ve seen how students use information not as a means of learning new things about the world but, instead, as a means of reassuring themselves they know enough already. Our experiences in the classroom, more than tweaks to Facebook algorithms, are what we’ll need to mount a successful campaign against the scourge of fake news.

Finally, whether we’re feeling anxious about headaches, fake news, or the misuse of information, there is always a temptation to avoid doing things that could intensify our anxiety. As a result, we may resist thinking about, and actively trying to resolve, some significant problems. This is generally a mistake. Because while avoidance may buy us some temporary relief, in the long run, it increases our anxiety. The big cats won’t stay away forever. There will come a day when we’ll have to confront them.

---

**Endnotes**

1. **schooloflifechannel.** “Why We’re All So Anxious.” YouTube, YouTube, 6 May 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=364D1Q.
He noted that the project team and working group included a mix of publishers, consortia and libraries, with 26 members participating http://charlotteinitiative.uncc.edu/ci/proj-ect_team. Among Chuck’s take-aways, often referenced during the afternoon, was the need to “name names” as well as the need to stop “talking past each other” among the various constituencies.

Following Chuck, October Ivins, Project Consultant for the grant, noted that two additional topics — ILL and Course Use — had been added to the original “core principles” being studied. She described the iterative process used during the investigation, which combined surveys with interviews. Talking about the publisher survey (conducted from August 2016-April 2017), she was pleased to report that 66 of 162 lengthy surveys were in fact completed. Results showed good support for “no DRM,” unlimited simultaneous users, and perpetual access. On the added topic of ILL, however, only 17% showed support. Publishers also noted that Course Selected books represent 80% of revenue and therefore may not be open for more lenient policies.

John Sherer, Director of the UNC Press, was next up and reminded members in attendance that an Ithaka study on the cost of publishing scholarly monographs has stated that each book represents an expected loss of $20,000. He also reminded us that 85-90% of publisher sales are still print based. Sherer finds the concept of “prefunding” now under investigation by the AAU/ARL/AAUP cooperative to be worth following. He also proposed a “radical” idea, in which all university press books would be available for access for a reasonable fee (X) and where that fee, with a “kicker” (X++) would allow ownership of high use items. With enough participation from libraries, the dollar value of X could be affordable.

Though he was not a member of the grant’s working groups, Michael Zeoli, who handles Content Development & Partner Relations for GOBI, presented a fascinating series of slides illustrating book sales and trends based on data from 27 eBook platforms served by GOBI. Among his observations were that eBook collections are on the rise as expected but that the coverage among the collections is quite uneven, primarily due to copyright differences between various providers and their publisher agreements. He also reported that DDA as a percent of total sales has increased dramatically, from 10% in 2012 to 28% in 2017.

Following a break, a series of “Shotgun Highlights and Findings” were offered by members of the research teams and covered the following topics:

- Licensing Principles, Theresa Liedtka (University of Tennessee-Chattanooga) and Rebecca Seger (Oxford University Press)
- Course Use, Liz Siler (Collection Development Librarian, UNC Charlotte) and Kelly Denzer (Electronic Resources Librarian, Davidson College)
- Platforms & Preservation, Kate Davis (Assistant Director, Scholars Portal)
- User Experience, Alison Bradley (Collection Development Librarian, Davidson College)

My favorite personal take-away from these reports was the observation that one benefit of the entire investigation was a greater understanding of issues from each other’s points of view and that all involved wanted to continue the conversations and discussions. Completely in the spirit of the Charleston Conference! 🦁