Knowledge sovereignty: clearing the mental cobweb through library engagement

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Introduction

In the supersonic speed of the Digital Age, where humanity is bombarded with information from every direction, the concept of knowledge sovereignty arises as a beacon of intellectual empowerment and academic enabler. Knowledge sovereignty refers to the people’s ability and aptitude to control, access and navigate information to enable them make informed decisions and channel their activities toward right choices (Schläger et al., 2018). Within the milieu of knowledge sovereignty, libraries act as custodians of knowledge and temples of wisdom, while additionally playing a pivotal and strategic role in fostering knowledge sovereignty and assisting individuals in clearing the mental cobwebs created by information overload. In the opinion of Safadi and Watson (2021), from time immemorial, those who have access to accurate knowledge often monopolize it and use it to edge out opposition and gain competitive insights unavailable to any member of society.

Today, competition is aggressive, and technologies have hurriedly become outdated (Bereznoy, 2019). In view of this, it is imperative to be well grounded in cutting-edge knowledge to guarantee a competitive advantage (Herden, 2020), because what distinguishes successful organizations from the crowd is identifying new knowledge and their positive contribution to the workforce. The new normal in knowledge sovereignty practices is engaging in a knowledge-centric approach to create, scale and disseminate both new and existing knowledge throughout the organization within a short period of time (Vakharia et al., 2018), and creating a sort of knowledge authority and control from its domesticated use across time.

The digital overload dilemma

The digital era has brought incomparable access to information, but in equal proportion, it has given rise to a difficulty generally referred to as “information overload” or “information glut.” The overwhelming volume of data available from multifarious sources can lead to cognitive overload, misperception and mental fatigue (Bawden and Robinson, 2020). As a consequence of this challenging scenario, individuals may find themselves entangled in a mental cobweb of conflicting and contradictory information, making it challenging to distinguish dependable sources from misinformation (Hoq, 2014). The sum total of information, both on and offline, that people have access to has been amplified to the point that it has raised serious concerns to the point where people now suffer from a detrimental condition now referred to as “information overload.” The attendant consequence of this information explosion is the negative phenomenon of information anxiety (Himma, 2020).

The library as a sanctuary for clarity

Libraries, as veritable institutions of knowledge exchange, management and control, with their curated collections and commitment to knowledge organization, serve as sanctuaries for clarity amid the disorder of the digital realm (Pareek and Gangrade, 2016), with its notoriety for affording uncontrolled information output, leading to information overload. Unlike the immense and often unfiltered and unorganized landscape of the internet, libraries offer an arranged and vetted environment where people can discover information with confidence (Lasic-Lazic et al., 2021). The librarian’s proficiency becomes priceless in directing users through the substantial sea of resources, facilitating their ability to distinguish between trustworthy and untrustworthy information.

Empowering through information literacy

To clear the mental cobweb, libraries are not just repositories of books; they are centers for information literacy. Librarians and information scientists are fortified with the skills to traverse the various information sources, enable people become gainful information users by imparting critical thinking and evaluation skills to them (Abdullah and Zainab, 2008). Librarians provide services such as workshops and programs on media literacy, fact-checking and source evaluation that arm individuals with the tools they need to cut through the clutter and gain a sense of control over their information landscape.

Cultivating a diverse knowledge ecosystem

Libraries, in no small measure, contribute to knowledge sovereignty by curating diverse collections that reflect a multitude of perspectives and experiences. A well-versed collection not only provides users with an all-inclusive understanding of the subject matter but also fosters inclusivity and expands one’s worldview (Pandit and Gulzar, 2017). By engaging with materials from various cultures, disciplines and viewpoints, people can break free from the confines of a singular narrative, promoting a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the world (Pandit and Gulzar, 2017).

Community engagement and dialogue

Libraries also function as community centers, promoting intellectual discourse, dialogue and the exchange of ideas.
Through book clubs, discussion forums, interactive physical and social media events, libraries encourage people to engage in meaningful conversations, challenging preconceptions, prejudice and expanding their mental horizons (Kranich, 2012). These communal spaces become vital in breaking down mental cobwebs and jaded perspectives by providing platforms for shared learning and collaborative exploration of ideas and creation of new knowledge frontiers.

**Conclusion**

In the age of information overload, achieving knowledge sovereignty is a journey toward mental clarity and empowerment, through libraries activating and exercising knowledge authority and control mechanisms easily open to them. Libraries, with their commitment to information literacy, developing diverse but dependable collections, and community engagement, stand as guardians of this journey toward achieving knowledge sovereignty. By actively participating in the library experience, individuals not only clear their mental cobwebs but also contribute to the collective wisdom of the community. In embracing the principles of knowledge sovereignty, libraries, as citadels of democratization of information access and knowledge empowerment, become not only repositories of information but beacons of intellectual freedom and clarity in an increasingly complex world of information overload and information uncertainty.

**REFERENCES**


**FURTHER READING**


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