

Summary



Truth or Fake News? / A Political Challenge and Its Consequences for Libraries (Jan-Pieter Barbian)
(pp. 190 – 194)

This article on the topic of »fake news« was commissioned for the April 2019 issue of BuB at the beginning of December 2018. No one suspected then how virulent this would in fact have become. Naturally one's first thoughts on this subject revolve around the current president of the USA, who himself dispenses a multitude of fake news or »alternative facts«, while in turn vilifying any press coverage which is critical of him as »fake news«. But a disclosure published on December 19th, 2018, by the German weekly news magazine, »Der Spiegel«, about the often award-winning reportage of its staff member Claas Relotius has made it clear to everyone that even such a respected and tradition-steeped magazine can fall victim to the virus of untruthfulness. And this is in no way a unique experience, as Jan-Pieter Barbian's article points out.

The dimensions of this matter are slowly reaching the minds of librarians and their associations. The search for suitable instruments, however, needs to be accelerated and intensified. Every library ought to make use of the expertise of external advisors in order to explore the depths of this complex problem. It must not remain the concern of just a few specialists within libraries, as it is a cross-sectional task involving everyone. To this end it is necessary to provide training to each library's own staff, to sensitise them to the issues and provide concrete information. With this foundation libraries will become able to take action and update their collections competently while informing their users of the many aspects of this issue. An integral part of this process will involve drawing upon Internet sources and a very precise understanding of how social media function.

The Crisis Years of Journalism / A Journalists' Cooperative Seeks to Strengthen Trust in High-Quality Journalism (Christian Schwägerl)
(pp. 200 – 204)

Authoritarian political movements are rapidly increasing worldwide. They are also directed against a free, independent press that is based on verifiable facts. At the same time the process of information dissemination around the world is becoming controlled by major players like Google and Facebook. These platforms are primarily interested in using emotions to bind their users to their platforms in order to expose them to advertising. Through automated, targeted recommendations Facebook and Youtube reinforce users in their pre-existing attitudes, instead of supporting a rational opinion-forming process based on objective sources of information.

The task of journalists is to extract factual matter about complex world events in order to provide their readers with reliable information. The ethos of high-quality journalism also encompasses the exposure of wrongs and abuses. As a pre-requisite to being able to produce factual reportage it is necessary to engage in research. Journalists must be able to visit the sites where news is being made, to go wherever it is necessary to go and to interview the many kinds of people involved. Before a report is published, it must undergo critical fact-checking. This is primarily the duty of editors who review an article for plausibility, make further inquiries and demand subsequent improvements from the author when necessary. The framework of conditions for this process of intensive inspection of the facts has been deteriorating dramatically. Editorial offices are being cut back or disbanded altogether.

In order to meet these challenges to the free press, a group of so-called »reef reporters« (in German: RiffReporter) is developing a cooperative in Germany to facilitate high-quality journalism. Just as a coral reef offers shoreline protection and ecosystem services, so, in a figurative sense, these »reef reporters« seek to protect our social ecosystem by helping other journalists to expand their expertise, undertake in-depth investigations, afford taking time for their research and have access to the ways and means to deal with facts carefully.

Oodi – an Ode to Finland's Libraries / New Building Opened in Helsinki (Beate Detlefs)
(pp. 221 – 225)

Oodi is the name of the newest branch library in the centre of Helsinki. Dubbed a »showcase for Finnish architecture«, it features the present and future of the public library in northern Europe within a space of 17,250 square metres. The opening celebration took place on December 5 and 6, 2018. December 6th was dedicated especially to families, with a programme of children's theatre, music and readings for children.

As one of the 37 neighbourhood libraries in the HelMet network, Oodi is not Helsinki's main library, but it is the one that lies in the centre of Helsinki. Pasila Library, Helsinki's main library, is located in a different part of the city. Oodi is located directly next to the Central Railway Station, opposite the Parliament House, and surrounded by major cultural institutions such as the Finlandia Hall, the Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, the Helsinki Music Centre, as well as the offices of the Helsingin Sanomat, the country's largest daily newspaper.

The decision to build this new library was taken in 2012, and 544 bids were submitted anonymously by architecture firms from around the world. The competition was won by the young Finnish architecture team ALA. The building cost 98 million euros, the interior furnishings an additional 12 million euros. The shelving, which can hold up to 100,000 items, is of medium height. Produced in Italy, the shelving units are light-weight, fireproof, flexible, transparent and equipped with excellent interior lighting.

A staff of 54 now works at Oodi. Because the employees of the HelMet network were required to re-submit an application to work at Oodi, the team consists entirely of highly motivated individuals who have decided that this is exactly where they want to work. Resulting vacancies in the overall system were filled with many new colleagues who had just completed their studies. In a few years a rotation of staff is planned, and the entire media collection of the HelMet network will also undergo a rotation beginning in the middle of 2019.

Translated by Martha Baker