Chapter 9

Libraries and democracy: complementarity in a regime of truth

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Western culture has developed based on notions that truth, by overcoming falsehood, underpins democracy. However, Rose and Barros (2017) claim we are no longer concerned with creating a consensus of knowledge, and Harsin (2015) that we are undergoing a shift from a regime of truth to a regime of post-truth (ROPT), where citizens acknowledge that they cannot easily verify a truth claim. Traditionally, libraries and librarians have played an important part in the provision of information to support democracy and the democratic processes. In this context, this chapter reports on a study conducted in 2017 which explores and compares the respective contributions of public libraries and university libraries in Sydney, Australia, to supporting democratic processes. It concludes that in spite of a shift from an institutionally-based view of truth to one focussing on an individual, librarians are still concerned with principles that underpin the understanding of quality in information.

Democracy and library services

Western culture has developed based on notions that truth, by overcoming falsehood, underpins democracy. However, Rose and Barros (1983) claim we are no longer concerned with creating a consensus of knowledge, and Harsin (2015) asserts that we are undergoing a shift from a regime of truth to a regime of post-truth, where citizens acknowledge that they cannot easily verify a truth claim. Foucault (1980) – whose influence on thinking on the relationship between information, knowledge and authority is described by Andrew Whitworth in chapter 2 of this book – wrote that 'each society has its regime of truth, its general politics of truth: that is the type of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true, the mechanisms and instances which enables one to distinguish true and false statements' (1980, 131). Foucault's regimes of truth are produced by institutions in which there are relatively clear processes for identifying the authority of the source of a message and therefore the credibility of that message, control over channels of communication is understood, the processes for validation of the content of messages are recognised, mechanisms for addressing audiences are regulated and competing messages can be categorised so that the flow of information is not overwhelming.

For Harsin (2015), key factors in a regime of post-truth include fragmentation of sources of information leading to a dilution of authority, the creation of social groups bounded by the use of technology, content targeted to these bounded groups, along with shifts in journalistic practices, political communication and the speed of communication. Lewandowsky, Cook and Ecker (2017, 420) identified seven societal trends indicating 'the emergence of a post-truth world', although they acknowledge that this list may not be exhaustive. These included declining trust in institutions and civic engagement, as well as in science and research findings, fragmentation in sources and audiences, growing inequality in society, polarisation in politics and a rise in individualism.

Libraries work within an institutional regime of truth, and have been considered a 'trusted forum', evaluating information and playing a role in increasing civic literacy (Rettig, 2010). They are representative of an institutional regime of truth that has democratic processes inherent in it, as reflected in statements of their professional associations, for example, 'A thriving national and global culture, economy and democracy will best be advanced by people who are empowered in

all walks of life to seek, evaluate, use and create information effectively to achieve their personal, social, occupational and educational goals. It is a basic human right in a digital world and promotes social inclusion within a range of cultural contexts (Alexandria Proclamation 2005)' (Australian Library and Information Association, 2006).

To understand how libraries support democratic processes, it is important to recognise what democracy is. Rivano Eckerdal (2017, 1012) notes the existence of two traditions, the liberal tradition and the democratic or deliberative tradition. The liberal tradition is concerned with rights and the respect for individual freedoms, valuing the individual's ability to make well-founded decisions which contribute to society. The democratic or deliberative tradition is concerned with equality and active citizenship (Touraine, 2000), and values open discussion in which the conflict in points of view can be made public, even if they cannot be resolved (in similar vein, chapter 1 of this book outlines four different 'models' for modern democracies). Budd (2007) echoes the well-recognised view in the literature of librarianship that fundamental to the democratic tradition are deliberation and reflection among people in a community and that for these to be possible, 'informing sources' are a fundamental requirement. These elements the roles that public libraries have traditionally been seen to play in a community, leading to well-informed local communities, able to play an active part in shaping these communities, can be seen as significant factors in a regime of truth.

Lor (2018), on the other hand, acknowledges that libraries are confronted by a discourse of post-truth, and states that libraries and librarians need to revise their understanding of the relationship between libraries, information and democracy (2018, 317), because, in his view, the issues go beyond the world of libraries into society at large and thus information literacy frequently developed through single sessions is no longer an adequate solution. Librarians need to partner with educators, journalists and the media to rework this relationship, using their trusted position (Rettig, 2010,) as soft power and maintain a focus on a longer term goal of remaining a constant in a context of 'ephemeral messages and constantly shifting attention (Lor, 2018, 317).

Public libraries are in a focal position in the development and maintenance of a democratic society. Not only do professional associations give them a specific responsibility for supporting the development of a democratic society (Australian Library and Information Association, 2009), but in New South Wales these libraries may also provide services for the employees of local government, engaged in setting and implementing the policy which, at the local level, affect people's everyday lives. An earlier study of the practices of public librarians in providing information services, including information literacy services, to these employees found that the belief that the employees were information literate because of their post-secondary education and the availability of access to Google, meant there was no longer such a pressing need for information literacy programs or for targeted reference services (Yerbury and Henninger, 2018). Thus, the study reported in this chapter sought to explore the complementarity of the information literacy services provided in these public libraries and in university libraries, as well as considering the extent to which a new regime of truth might be developing in the view of the information literacy services provided by those librarians.

Information Literacy

Information literacy is often linked to the ability to use information for effective decision-making and the support for a regime of truth. Public libraries may be involved in programs intended to develop information literacy (Kranich, 2005), an activity perhaps more commonly linked to schools and universities; Gibson and Jacobson argue that all librarians are engaged in a teaching and learning process with their communities (2018, 184). Their own professional education,

which has provided them with a range of skills, including understandings of the authority of information, the development of search strategies intended to retrieve relevant and appropriate resources, methods for understanding the needs and expectations of groups of information users and of individual enquirers and principles for assuring the quality of information and information resources, fits librarians for this role in supporting a regime of truth. An approach to information literacy and to the identification of 'fake news' which relies on the use of checklists, is criticised by Whitworth (2014) as having too narrow a focus (see also chapter 2 of this book) and Lor (2018, 315) considers such tools as the IFLA checklist on how to spot fake news 'naïve'.

Librarians may be able to engage in the kinds of dialogues that can promote critical scrutiny of sources leading to conversations on how information is created and used, going beyond a limiting application of a checklist of evaluation criteria (Rivano Eckerdal, 2017, 1026). Academic librarians may develop in students 'habits of mind' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977), through carefully designed learning experiences. Tran and Yerbury (2015) showed how recent graduates used the information skills they had learned to assert their own criteria on the outputs of searches conducted in their workplace; they were able to demonstrate and articulate their thinking, that is, their 'habits of mind' in the face of Google's so-called filter bubble. These 'habits of mind', while at one level belonging to an individual, can be seen as shared knowledge 'within the community', whether of students, employees or citizens (Rivano Eckerdal, 2017, 1011). Marsh and Yang (2017, 402) go further, asserting that someone who is information literate should not only be able to find and evaluate information, they should be able to 'recognise weak arguments', which may be developed from credible sources of information.

This literature, mostly, takes a normative approach to the roles that librarians 'ought' to play in developing and maintaining a well-informed community, whose members are able to contribute to the development of a democratic society. This study aims provide empirical evidence by exploring the practices of public librarians who provide programs and services for the employees of local government and those of the academic librarians who may have supported the development of information literacy in these people when they were students.

Methodology

Using a practice theory approach, this study has collected data from the small number of specialist public librarians in Sydney, New South Wales, whose specific role is to provide information services to employees of local government, elected representatives in local government and the general public and from librarians in university libraries with some level of responsibility for the provision of information literacy services and programs. Six public librarians were interviewed and two more provided written responses (L1-L8). These participants, all women with at least twenty years professional experience, came from six local government areas, ranging in size from a population of just over 36,000 to over 218,000. Eighteen librarians (L9-L26) employed in seven university libraries with a significant presence in Sydney were interviewed, ranging from subject librarians to senior managers responsible for policy development, including information literacy. They included men and women who had a range of experience, with some having only two years of professional experience and others having more than twenty. Interviews, which lasted on average 45 minutes, were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. To identify key features of the practice of these librarians, transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis, with a focus on democratic processes and information literacy. Both phases of the study were approved through the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Technology Sydney with the condition that no participant was to be named, the employing university, similarly, was not to be named and the local government

area in which the public library was situated was to be anonymised. Contiguous numbering of participants should not be taken to mean that participants are from the same library.

The context of the libraries

The metropolitan area of Sydney in New South Wales (NSW) currently covers thirty local government areas, generally referred to as councils. Local government was in a state of flux when interviews were carried out in 2017 following the NSW State Government's proposal to reduce the number of councils through amalgamations. This proposal was hotly contested, and although some mergers went ahead, others were eventually dropped. Each council employs a number of staff with a wide range of responsibilities. A key factor about council workforces is that local government employees are generally more highly educated than the general workforce (Hastings *et al*, 2015, 9), with more than 30% having studied at university and more than 40% have a qualification from the Technical and Further Education sector. The public libraries included in this study have established services, known as corporate library services, especially for council employees, although all would provide services on request. In New South Wales, corporate librarians were appointed by a number of councils from the early 2000s, some responsible for collections of materials and others not. The introduction of these services came at a time when public libraries had access to online databases whereas the council employees did not necessarily have easy access to the internet. Over time, the number of corporate librarians appointed has decreased, for a variety reasons, including universal access to the internet for council employees with Google seen to remove the need for specialist assistance in searching; changes in organizational structure; shifts in local priorities; and the non-replacement of retiring staff. In councils where amalgamations had taken place, a review of library services was being undertaken and some librarians interviewed were unsure about the future of the services they offered to council employees.

The seven university libraries represented in this study included the five universities traditionally based in Sydney and the two national universities with campuses in the city. The universities of which these libraries are a part vary in size, and fall into three groups by enrolment numbers, two having over 50,000 students, three around 40,000 and two below 35,000 students. All universities have seen a significant increase in student numbers in the past ten years with an increase of 43.7% nationally across the sector (Australia DET, 2017). The university libraries provide information literacy services and programs in a range of ways: one provides only online programs with no face to face interactions with students, while another only provides face to face programs for coursework postgraduate students. Some require completion of an information literacy program (a hurdle task); some include statements about information literacy in the list of attributes a graduate is expected to have; all have online materials, but for some these are in no way linked to specific education programs. Universities have also seen an increase in the number of casual academic staff, with more than 50% of teaching now being carried out by staff employed on a semester by semester basis, meaning that librarians need to renegotiate links for teaching into subjects each semester.

Explaining the work

Without exception, the public librarians were clear that their work involved providing information and informational resources to council employees, to verify information within the context of council decision-making and to support council employees in 'sorting quality from dross'. Their work was easy to summarise. This was not the case with the academic librarians, all of whom described the provision of different programs and services to different parts of the university community. The academic librarians, including those whose titles indicated that they

were subject specialists, noted that it was rare for them to provide information services to administrative staff or to the executive of the university, although they assumed that requests came at senior management level or through the university librarian. However, everyone spoke of conducting 'consultations', one to one sessions aimed at helping researchers to understand the databases and conduct a useful search.

As a group, the academic librarians tended to make a distinction between their responsibilities in providing services to coursework students and their roles in supporting teaching staff, researchers and the administrative staff, placing much more emphasis on the former. For coursework students, they did not see themselves as providing information resources, but rather as working in collaboration with academic staff and sometimes with learning support staff in the university to develop an understanding of the process of finding and evaluating resources. The way they expressed this role differed; some (L9, L10,L12, L14, L16, L17, L19, L26) saw themselves developing skills of critical thinking; some (L11, L12, L14, L15, L16, L18, L23) thought their role as 'teacher' was focussed on helping students to be successful in their assessment tasks; a third group (L18; L20, L21, L22, L24, L25, L26) focussed on encouraging the understanding of evidence-based practice; and a fourth on the embedding of information literacy in the education program of the university (L12, L13, L14, L19). Although several librarians assumed that critical thinking subsumed the notion of rational argument (L9, L10, L13, L19) only L10 emphasised the importance of being able to develop an argument: 'You [an engineering student] have got the skills to put up a building, you don't have the skills to put up an argument'. Several participants expressed their view of their role differently in different parts of the interview and thus appear in more than one group.

Complementarity of approach

For graduate employees working in local government, the question of whether the services provided by public librarians and university librarians were complementary was the starting point for interpreting data gathered in this study. Respondent L25 expressed the view that the relationship between a public library's services and democratic processes was straightforward and could be openly discussed in the local government context, whereas any focus on these processes in the university would have to be a 'deep game', a phrase from gaming, indicating greater complexity, including a number of options accessible through a range of skills. . Most academic librarians acknowledged that their university had statements of graduate attributes which included the skills of information literacy, yet few (L11, L12, L13, L14, L15 and L24) recognised the contributions of their programs of information literacy to 'take into their professional lives' (L15) because 'the priority is with current students' (L12). University libraries do provide services to alumni graduates, sometimes at no additional cost to the individual, but these are restricted to access to the collection and to open access databases. Only L18 mentioned interviewing graduates and their employers as a way to make information literacy programs more relevant. As will be explored in more detail below, there is a focus on quality in both types of library: in public libraries, the focus is on the quality of the answer provided to users/enquirers, whereas in the university setting, the focus is on the quality of the resource and the way that the content of the resource is used to present an answer.

Understanding library contributions to democratic processes

There is no common understanding between the public librarians and the academic librarians of how their professional practice contributes to democratic processes. From the perspective of Lloyd's information literacy landscapes (2005), this is perhaps not surprising. Whereas all the public librarians (L1-L8) thought that the way they raised awareness of information resources

contributed to the processes of deliberation and decision-making in their community, not all of the academic librarians expressed the importance of information and its relationship to democratic processes. Indeed, six of them (L9, L11, L15, L17, L24, L25) expressed surprise at the question of how their professional practice might contribute to democratic processes: 'That's a big question!' 'That's a really tough one!' L14 considered that information literacy programs 'enhance awareness … in a professional sense … so it is an oblique contribution to democratic processes'. L9 thought that the work of the librarian should be 'apolitical', but at the same time acknowledged that 'we can make people harder to fool and we can make people better at fooling'.

A second key difference between the public librarians and the academic librarians is that the public librarians saw themselves as being re-active rather than pro-active (L5, L7), answering questions from council employees and elected representatives, although some (L1, L2, L4, L5) acknowledged that the work of the public library helped to empower the local community because of its involvement in the consultative processes for local policy making and its work in helping community members to understand the decision-making processes of local government. The academic librarians who did acknowledge their work might enhance democratic processes saw themselves in a more pro-active role, for example engaged in 'creating more information-savvy citizens [who were] … more aware of information sources' (L19), 'equipping our students for life' (L24) or 'empowering the students to use information responsibly and critically' (L25). L17 also took an active, future oriented perspective, explaining that developing skills in evaluating information was important because 'if you don't have reliable information, then I guess it can't be a true democracy'. This distinction between re-active and pro-active approaches can obscure a more fundamental distinction. The public librarians were concerned with the identification of content to be used in deliberative processes, whereas the academic librarians emphasised the importance of skilled individuals able to use information.

Understanding a regime of truth

Implicit in the responses of these librarians was the assumption that changes in the world around them could signal changes in a regime of truth, but that they believed that an information literate populace could moderate the effects of some of these changes.

To a large extent, the public librarians asserted that 'things haven't changed' (L5) their focus here being on the principles of evaluating quality in information, even though they described significant changes to their work context. L8 stated the view that one of the reasons for there being less emphasis on information literacy, and fewer opportunities to do the 'meatier searches', was because most staff were tertiary educated (a point made also by L1), and because of their experiences at university, were better able to do their own searching. As already noted, this ability for employees to do their own searching was also facilitated by the introduction of desktop access to the internet. However, these changes did not mean that the librarians did not provide information literacy services; they provided them in different ways, for example through induction programs for new staff with information posted on the relevant intranet page (L4), and through special workshop sessions, where 'we can teach them how to access the information themselves or how to use the databases' (L3) and other events (L1).

On the other hand, the academic librarians were aware they were doing things differently. The disruptions to their work processes have arisen from the increase in student numbers and through the casualisation of the teaching staff. Whereas technology had been seen as disruptive to the relationship between the specialist public librarians and council employees, in the university

setting, it permitted academic librarians to maintain and even extend the services they provided to students and in some universities, the requirement for students to complete online information literacy programs outside the constraints of a program of study meant that the need to liaise with teaching staff, who may change every semester, was removed. Some academic librarians noted that unlike in the past, their expertise was not always used directly in interactions with students and staff, but was sometimes mediated through others, for example with skills in the use of educational technologies (eg L14, L22) or with expertise in learning support (L14, L25). Others noted the continuing importance of establishing partnerships with academic staff in developing information literacy programs, as this meant that the particular requirements of a field of study or practice (L10, L11, L13, L15. L18, L20, L21, L22, L24) were emphasised to students, although 'there's real struggle in that way to try and cover some of the stuff that maybe academics don't see as much value in' (L25).

The championing of open access, similarly, is a feature of a longstanding regime of truth, where scholarly knowledge is expected to be able to flow freely, rather than being constrained by economic and legal factors, such as cost and the licensing of access to scholarly work. Many of the academic librarians (L12, L13, L14, L15, L16, L18, L21, L25, L26) expressed themselves as strong supporters of the open access movement. Some considered it an important step in the democratisation of scholarly knowledge, pointing to the benefits to the wider community in gaining access peer reviewed content outside of the licensing conditions which constrained so much of the literature describing innovations relevant to professional practice. Those with involvement in the health sciences spoke of open access research materials as an important contribution to the global field of health care. This topic was touched on by only one public librarian (L1), when she reported on a conversation with a professional in the community who championed open access as a way to maintain currency with new methods and research findings in his field.

Open access is an important aspect of a regime of truth since those who are no longer affiliated to a university may lose access to the key resources they have relied on during their professional education. The licensing conditions of these commercial databases preclude alumni of a university in most cases. The impact of this is that graduates educated through the use of specialist materials relevant to their professional training often lose access to the very materials necessary for continuing development as professionals. In other words, they may know how to access authoritative resources, but they are unable to do so; thus, where open access materials are not available, they are left to use what they can find through a Google search or through social media.

Providing authoritative information or ensuring that users understood how to identify authoritative sources of information was common to all participants. L3, a public librarian, emphasised the importance of focussing on local matters and 'hav[ing] the facts right'. All public librarians made a distinction between the kind of search a librarian might do and one done by a staff member using Google: 'It's not like quality, is it?' (L4), although it might sometimes be 'fit for purpose' (L8). The search done by the librarian would not use sources lacking in 'authority' (L5). All the public librarians acknowledged that from time to time a key part of their work is verifying information, while no academic librarian reported having been asked to do fact checking. However, understanding how to identify appropriate databases, peer reviewed resources and the standing of journals was central to the work of many of the academic librarians. In other words, the focus was on authority, but within the context of scholarship, where peer review was taken as the surrogate for authority. One respondent (L11) applied the

principles of authority and trusted sources to the social media resources commonly used globally in the health sciences area. She explained: 'I want people, right from the beginning, to recognise the authoritative sources of information, so [we set up a Twitter feed in the teaching software and included], the World Health Organisation … PLOS ONE … that sort of thing … so they really start to think, well, the World Health Organisation, they're good. They recognise PLOS ONE as a trusted source.'

Librarians in both phases of the study identified what they saw as 'key trusted partnerships' (L2) or 'natural allies' (L12, L24) in the development of a well-informed information literate community and in helping to support of a regime of truth. For public librarians, partners were most likely to be identified as the local newspaper (L1, L4, L5), local chambers of commerce (L1, L3, L7), key community groups and non-government organisations (L1, L5, L6). Partners for academic librarians were most likely to be identified as staff in schools, both teachers and teacher librarians (L5, L6, L12, L16, L17, L18, L19, L22, L24, L25) or librarians in other kinds of library, especially public libraries (L10, L15. L18, L24, L26). Others were seen as 'natural allies' because of the professional area related to field of study, so local businesses and industry (L18), community groups (L14), professional associations (L14, L24) and health professionals (L12, L26) were all considered important potential partners, often emphasising the strategic direction of the university. The media, so important for a local community, and local organisations which are part of a community were mostly not mentioned by academic librarians.

While all the public librarians took for granted that they, as public librarians, had a responsibility for contributing towards a well-informed and information literate community, that is, to habits of mind in the community, the responses of academic librarians did not take a uniform approach.

That libraries, the media and education (i.e. schools and universities) had responsibility for this essential aspect of democratic processes were stock responses, but one respondent quipped: 'If I had the answer, I'd be President of the World' (L10). Others recognised that identifying a single institution, or even several, as having responsibility was problematic: 'Librarians might think they [have the responsibility] but they don't. A cop-out answer is 'everybody'.' (L17); 'rather than have that bystander effect where everyone says it's someone else's [responsibility], it's actually all of our [responsibility]' (L12); Who IS responsible? … in a free society, how do you tell people what they should think?' (L23). Nonetheless, there was a strong sense among some academic librarians (including L16 and L18), that 'as always in life, the ultimate responsibility remains with the first person' (L22); or 'everyone in a community should be an autonomous individual … so it's a bit paternalistic to say who's responsible' (L24).

Similar but Different

At a superficial level, these findings suggest that the services and programs provided to university students and to graduate employees in local government are complementary, supporting the assertions from employees in local government, who claimed to have developed skills in information literacy as part of their university education. At a more complex level, an analysis of these findings to shed light on the regime of truth within which the two sets of librarians operate will be instructive.

A similar regime of truth emerges from the practices of the librarians who participated in this study. Firstly, the ability to know how to 'sort quality from dross' (L8) is seen as essential to the practices of both public librarians and academic librarians. Secondly, recognition of a societal engagement with a regime of truth was evident in the use of the phrase 'natural allies' (L12, L24) and in the commonality in the listing of those with whom a library, whether public or university,

might partner to ensure a well-informed and information literate community. The unhesitating inclusion of teachers and teacher librarians, and other educators, journalists and the media as potential partners in the development of democratic practices matches one of Lor's four suggestions for ways to revise the understanding of the relationship between libraries and democracy (2018, 317). Thirdly, the participants in this study are, in one way or another, engaged in a teaching and learning process within their communities, as Gibson and Jacobson (2018) argue, in order to strengthen across that community a key aspect of a regime of truth, the ability to use the skills of information literacy (Rivano Eckerdal, 2017, 1011). An example of the institutionalisation of the importance of the skills of information literacy was to be found in the statements of graduate attributes or graduate capabilities issued by the universities.

There are also strong indications of the potential for differences in the expression of regimes of truth. Harsin (2015) and Lewandowsky, Cook and Ecker (2017) identified a range of factors which could indicate that a regime of truth is shifting towards a regime of post-truth. These include fragmentation of content and audience, digitisation, individualisation and the use of social media. Each of these is evident in the descriptions the librarians give of their practices and their perceptions of them, although the concern for political polarisation was missing. While some academic librarians clearly value the provision of identical online materials in different degree programs, where all new students have to complete a so-called 'hurdle task', others emphasise the importance of understanding the differences in fields of study, leading to a range of different content. L15, aware that the ways the big database providers present their products and searching capabilities impacts skills development in information literacy programs in a university context, proposed that it was important to incorporate the materials produced by companies such as Clarivate and Scopus in those programs. As already noted, only one academic librarian discussed how she incorporated the use of social media by authoritative organisations in the education program she had developed. The public librarians were all sceptical of the value of content found through Google, and of the use of social media, although one acknowledged almost grudgingly that such content could be 'fit for purpose'. Online access to scholarly materials was taken for granted, and although only one librarian (L22) specifically mentioned predatory journals, most discussed the importance of understanding how to identify peer-reviewed material.

A major difference between the public librarians and the academic librarians is in the emphasis that the latter seem to give to the individual. The linking of information literacy to academic success brings the focus to the individual student, as does the emphasis on critical thinking, which in the educational context is often considered the skill of an individual, rather than a habit of mind that could form an expectation of society. The emphasis on the individual is also apparent in the assertion that it was important to avoid the bystander effect and to recognise that we each have a responsibility to ensure that the information we find and use is reliable, so that the responsibility for contributing to a well informed and information literate community rests with individuals.

Yet, this significant emphasis on the individual does not need to be seen as evidence of a move to a regime of post-truth. Instead, following Rivano Eckerdal (2017, 1012), it can be seen as a difference in an understanding of what democracy entails. It would seem that most of the academic librarians, with their emphasis on individual skills and responsibilities, are working with the liberal tradition of democracy, emphasising the individual, whereas all of the public librarians can be seen to work with the democratic tradition of democracy, acknowledging an emphasis on a shared acceptance of how society should work. There is no easy explanation for

this difference in understanding of what democracy entails; here, as there is no evidence, there can only be speculation. Two possible explanations come to mind. The first is that the public librarians, all of whom have more than twenty years of professional experience, have a worldview which differs from their younger counterparts in the university libraries, bringing to mind Bennett's claims (2007) about generational differences in notions of civic engagement. The second is that the culture of the universities more overtly reflects values of individualism than does the culture of local government, and although equity and inclusiveness were stressed by several participants from academic libraries, and others acknowledged that students were also citizens and members of society, the over-riding emphasis was on students who are individuals needing to be educated and trained to succeed as students and in the workplace.

Conclusion

The level of information literacy of local government employees, developed during their post-secondary education, and their familiarity with online searching, are shifting the focus of the specialist public librarians from the process of developing information literacy skills to the quality of the outcome of searches conducted by the employees. Whether they are from a public library or a university, the librarians who participated in this study see the regime of truth within which they provide information services in similar ways, with the emphasis on the quality and authority of the information provided and the development of skills in students and local government employees to determine these. Yet, the conceptualisation of democracy within which these practices take place appear to be different, although it is unclear whether this arises from the librarians themselves or from the culture of the organisations in which they work. This is a topic for further research.

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