

SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN THE DIGITAL AGE: DIGITIZATION AGAINST LIBRARY ANXIETY

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Abstract

The society of the 21st century is a witness of digital transition in our history. The information is available for anyone online and offline too, because of the results of these changes. Nowadays the environment which provides access to information is more complex like the methods used in the past. The types of the information carriers are changed, and so are the channels of communication. The exclusivity of printed sources is ceased because of the internet, which is the beginning of the homogenized information. In the digital world the amount of available information grew which is the result of easier, faster publication and the blurring of the role of authors and consumers.

Because of these, the appearance of diseases caused by too much available information is nowadays more frequent. The 21st century's information diseases – like library anxiety, information anxiety or information overload – are indicators of one species of fear and anxiety. These diseases are primarily detectable in university students. The fear of using a library, or information anxiety could have strong influence on students' learning performance (Mellon, 1986).

Information overload, the feeling of anxiety caused by too much available information are not new, nor eternal things. We can talk about it since Gutenberg, and the spread of printed books; namely that was the first time when people thought about information like there is too much of it and an average person cannot read and learn all of it in his or her lifetime.

In my research I deal with library anxiety detailed, especially school libraries. The inspiration came from my workplace which is a school library in an elementary- and high school. In my experience the 11-17 years old children it is hard to make them a library user. This experience confirmed by the statistics of Hungarian Library Institute.

In my research I look for the answer why do not use the school library the 11-17 years old people. Though library anxiety proved by research, but mostly at senior or graduate students. At public education there is no research about it yet.

The theme is not a new thing, which is proved, since the 1980s there are new pieces of literature. I search for the answer, how digitization can help reduce library anxiety.

Keywords: digitization, library anxiety, students, education, school library, information anxiety

INTRODUCTION

The society of the 21st century is a witness of digital transition in our history. The information is available for anyone online and offline too, because of the results of these changes. Nowadays the environment which provides access to information is more complex than the methods used in the past. The types of the information carriers are changed, and so are the channels of communication. The exclusivity of printed sources is ceased because of the internet, which is the beginning of the homogenized information.

In the digital world the quantity of available information started to crop. Because of this, publishing information is faster and easier and the role of authors and consumers blurred.

Because of the amount of information nowadays information diseases are frequent. The 21st

century's information diseases such as library anxiety, information anxiety or information overload indicate a type of fear or anxiety which was detectable in high school and university students so far. Fear of using the library and the anxiety of searching information is often so strong that students cannot perform properly in their studies (Mellon 1986).

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In my research I deal with library anxiety detailed, especially school libraries. The inspiration came from my workplace which is a school library in an elementary- and high school. In my experience the 11-17 years old children it is hard to make them a library user. This experience confirmed by the statistics of Hungarian Library Institute.

METHODOLOGY

In my research I look for the answer for why do not the 11-17 years old people use the school library. Though library anxiety has been proven by research, it has been studied mostly at senior or graduate students. At public education there is no research about it yet.

The theme is not a new thing, which is proved, since the 1980s there are new pieces of literature. I search for the answer, how digitization can help reduce library anxiety.

RESULTS

There are several research pieces that prove that library anxiety can create barriers to students' use of the academic library.

Library anxiety needs to be understood by school librarians too, who interact daily with students in the school library environment.

Information diseases

Analyzing information diseases we have to know that these problems in the 21st century are real but not new and cannot be attributed solely and exclusively to the advent and spread of broadband internet. Information diseases are much more appropriate to be seen as a perpetual problem.

Information diseases can be grouped in around two triggers:

- quantity of information
- quality of information (Koltay, 2009)

The criteria for the quality and quantity of information and the problems that arise from it are also not new. Even before the 19th century, it was a problem that even within a narrower area it was impossible to read all the texts described and published. This became a more burning issue in the 19th century due to the general growth of literature. This is when the problem known as information overload first appeared. Finding the right amount of relevant information remains a central problem in information provision, but this is being made significantly more difficult by the exponential growth in the amount of available information.

There is currently no internationally accepted definition of information overload. We usually mean a situation where the effective use of information is made difficult for an individual by the amount of potentially useful, relevant information available (Koltay, 2009). The problem was given great importance already in the 1990s, but thanks to the advent of infocommunication

tools, the Internet and digital communication, its impact is becoming more and more felt nowadays.

Information anxiety

It has been said before that the presence of information diseases in the 21st century is indisputable, but by no means new. The concept of information anxiety first appears in Sir Francis Bacon's work dating back to 1605, where he writes that broad knowledge has many flaws and that increasing knowledge also increases anxiety.

The problem was defined by Richard Saul Wurman in his 1989 work, which draws attention to the ability of information supersaturation to cause psychiatric symptoms in people that are largely identical to the emotions evoked by anxiety. With this, "a new class of clinically well-defined anxiety-type disorders affecting many people has emerged, with behavior now evolving from feelings of helplessness due to the difficulty of navigating the immeasurable amount of information around us".

According to Wurman, the amount of information available and the knowledge we possess are inversely proportional to each other. The more information we have, the less knowledge we seem to possess. He explained this with the image of an ever-widening "gap" between what knowledge individuals possess and what an individual thinks they should know. (Naveed & Anwar, 2020) The cause of information anxiety may be that the individual feels unable to find the data they need and relevant from the immeasurable amount of information available to them. Wurman, on the other hand, points out that in addition to too much information available, too little can also cause anxiety, which in this way affects an individual's performance in seeking information. (Naveed & Anwar, 2020) In addition to finding and understanding the necessary information, the concept of information anxiety he creates includes information supersaturation (too much information), knowledge of the existence of information, and access to information as a possible trigger. (Naveed & Anwar, 2020)

Wurman expanded the concept of library anxiety, known since the 1980s, by coining the term information anxiety. Research on library anxiety began in the 1970s with the help of students from foreign universities, but the name was coined by Constance Mellon, a professor of library science at East Carolina University, and published in 1986 in *Library Anxiety: A Grounded Theory and its Development* (Mellon, 1986).

Tibor Koltay in his work following Bawden and Robinson (2009), he writes that "anxiety about information occurs when we are unable to access, understand, or use the information we need. It can be caused by information overload or insufficient information, misorganized, poorly presented information or a misunderstanding of the information environment." (Koltay, 2009). During information retrieval, a sense of helplessness develops in the individual as he or she tries to find, interpret, and store as much information as possible, leading to the formation of an disordered, opaque, and incomprehensible set of information during the research process.

However, Richard Wurman's work was criticized by the public consciousness, as he presented the phenomenon of information anxiety in his work with a significant magnification. Companies that offer personalized methodologies to overcome information anxiety, citing Wurman's work, have used this problem, which is increasingly present in the 21st century, for marketing and business purposes, even though libraries and higher education institutions' information literacy programs are struggling with similar efficiency and expertise. Such a program e.g. *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*, published by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) in 2015 program to fulfill the concepts of information literacy mentioned in the document, which aims to make education and information literacy more effective through storytelling (Vossler & Watts, 2017).

A collaboration between The School of New Resources at The College of New Rochelle and its library has resulted in the Research and Information Literacy course, which aims to provide adult education students with the opportunity to learn about and learn about the resources and services available in the library (Grandy, 2019).

Library anxiety

The theory of library anxiety

The term library anxiety was first used by Mellon in 1986 to describe the sense of fear and anxiety reported by students she studied, when confronted with the need to conduct research in an academic library for the first time (Carlile, 2007).

Mellon identified the recurrent themes of fear, confusion, a sense of being overpowered or lost, and a feeling of helplessness and dread, in the students' approach to having to use the library to conduct research. She linked the library phobia described by the fear of math or several tests and suggested the use of the term library anxiety (Carlile, 2007).

A student who has library anxiety often sees his or her skills as inadequate and the skills of other students' adequate and this feeling was a shameful thing and led to fear of asking a librarian for help.

Students often become so anxious about using the library for research that they cannot perform in school.

This anxiety can cause that they are unable to solve the problem logically and effectively. Mellon in her research characterized the library anxiety:

- "being overwhelmed by the size of the library
- not knowing where to find things and not understanding how the library is organized
- lack of confidence about knowing how to start a research
- lack of confidence about what to do in the library paired with the feeling of inadequacy and fear of asking help from the librarians." (Carlile, 2007)

In Mellon's research (1986) the words that students most often use in context of library anxiety are

- feelings: confused, embarrassed, frustrated, overwhelmed, lost
- nouns: fear, phobia, worry nervousness
- negative self-defeating thoughts such as inadequate, incompetent, unsure

The anxiety caused by the library is exacerbated when university lecturers expect their students to have the skills to use the library in accordance with the university's expectations, despite the fact that they are in sharp contrast to the university library. If students do not bring the right knowledge of library use to the university, do not have the necessary foundations, they can easily develop anxiety about library use and information retrieval.

Proper library use, as well as teaching information retrieval, often becomes the responsibility of university library librarians, but because their relationships with university students and faculty are limited, the organization of education is often difficult.

To reduce the anxiety caused by the library, one of the conclusions, as Keefer put it in his 1993 study, is that librarians have a responsibility to reduce students' anxiety about the library, which they can easily achieve by providing them with the kind of frustration they feel. natural. Don't wait for the student to ask, offer their help in the research. In doing so, they can strengthen human relationships and reduce anxiety in students.

Keefer's conclusions are also supported by Jiao and Onwuegbuzie's research up to the early

2000s and their results (Jiao & Onwuegbuzie, 2003). Among the conclusions of their studies among graduating and graduating students are the role of librarians in reducing library anxiety. Their behavior, the possible transformation of nonverbal communication, brings about significant changes. In many cases, a smile towards library users is enough, but the placement of control boards and inscriptions in several languages, as well as the employment of colleagues who speak confidently in a foreign language, demonstrably reduces the level of anxiety of foreign students. Creating a friendly, inviting and safe environment for the library is an important factor, as their research has shown the high impact of the learning environment on learning effectiveness and user anxiety levels (Cleveland, 2004).

What can a school library do?

The question rightly arises as to what a school library in a public education institution can do to make a visit to the library a source of entertainment rather than a source of stress.

An obvious solution to this is to start teaching library use at a pre-school age, and to plan regular library visits for the curriculum of library use classes and special classes, as well as class teacher classes.

CONCLUSIONS

"To provide a reference service that meets the needs of all clients, it is important to understand the sources of library anxiety, identify who is susceptible to it, and be aware of what can be done to minimise its negative effects." (Carlile, 2007)

One of my long-term plans is to conduct a national survey aimed at representativeness in order to get an idea of the library use of knowledge and habits of those present in Hungarian public education institutions. Using the results of the survey, I will develop suggestions to overcome the library-induced anxiety of the 10-18 year olds present in public education and to develop a positive attitude towards libraries.

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