

# THE INSIDER

#11 | August 2019



The future of libraries

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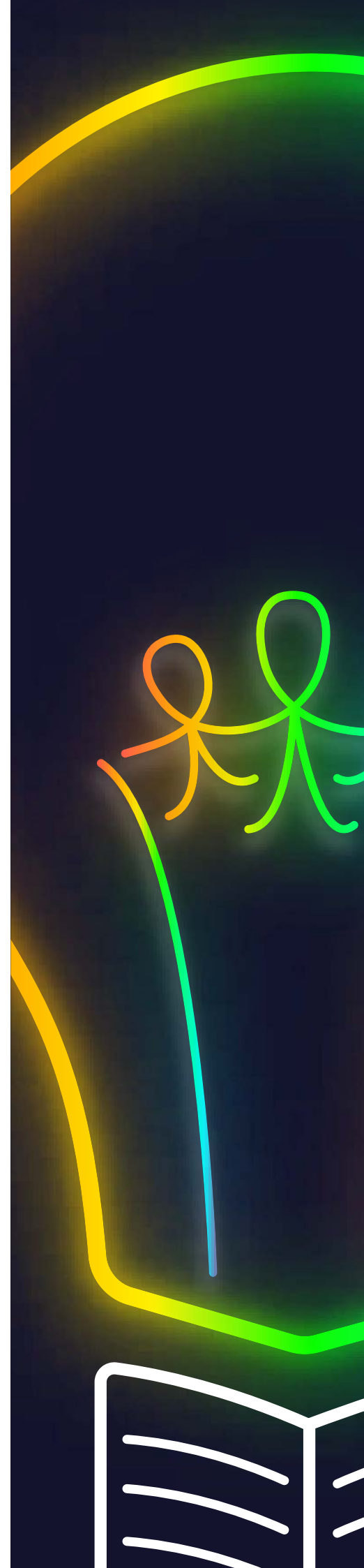
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I have more than a casual relationship with libraries, which is why I was thrilled to be working on this issue of The Insider, dedicated to what someone called “a glorious creation in plain sight.” And as much as that is absolutely true, it is sad in a way because it speaks to our tendency to take libraries for granted.

The longest career I ever held prior to my 16 years at PressReader was working in a university library, as an assistant in social sciences references. Those four years changed my life. What I discovered there was not only critical to my job at the time, but everything I’ve done going forward.

But it wasn’t until my senior year in high school in the mid-nineties that it dawned on me that the library was far more than just a place you went to borrow books from the guardians of resources (librarians). Almost overnight computers started to infiltrate the library; old school and new school started to compete for space. On one side of the library were sticks on racks with newspapers hanging off them and microfiche readers for accessing archives. And on the other side were printers and computers full of research software applications that were poised to change my life forever. It was both disconcerting and edifying at the same time.

I learned everything I could to perform research so I could teach other students how to create the structured queries that would help them unearth the most relevant sources for a paper, study, or thesis. With the abundance of online data even back then and the rudimentary search engines available, it was like searching for a needle in a haystack.

Technology made research easier

and faster as it opened up a multitude of sources and helped us validate or invalidate them. It also introduced new challenges that had us questioning ourselves. With virtually unlimited resources online, how many should I cite? Have I done all of my critical thinking or should I dig deeper? When is enough, enough? Would professors’ expectations be higher now that we had a wealth of knowledge at our fingertips?

Some felt it was the beginning of the end for the library, but, in fact, it was the dawn of a new Renaissance.

What value do libraries have for you? To me, they’re truly invaluable. They just need help communicating that value to the masses who think their phones are all they need now. Libraries have all the fundamental building blocks to rewrite their future to serve this new generation of patrons, but unfortunately, self-reinvention isn’t taught in library sciences programs and they are struggling.

Some libraries have rewritten themselves and I talk about them in this issue. But many are still hesitant to raze the old to raise the new. As marketing guru and best-selling author, Seth Godin once said, “The hard part isn’t coming up with a new idea. The hard part is falling out of love with the old idea.”

Libraries need to fall out of love with their old ideas ☒ the traditions that have run their course and the tasks that no longer add value (think overdue fines). They need to let go of outdated conventions (no talking, no food) and focus on convenience for its members instead. Libraries need to diversify their services and explore new funding sources that can help sustain them in the face of budget and staff cuts. They



**Nikolay Malyarov**

EVP, Chief Content Officer  
and General Counsel

[@malyarov](mailto:nmalyarov@pressreader.com)

need to be less insular and reach out to learn from other industries that have reinvented themselves. And they need to place more value on community than the dust-collecting content that lines their shelves.

Reinvention starts in the mind, not on a spreadsheet. It requires new thinking and the ability to imagine the art of the possible. A reinvented library is not an institution or a destination; it’s an experience rich in knowledge and humanity, whose worth is immeasurable.

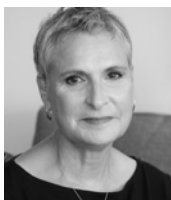
It’s important to remember that history often repeats itself and just as the Renaissance embraced a more individualistic view of a human being, so must libraries put the person at the center of everything they do.

Librarians as custodians of the world’s greatest treasures have the power to change the world. And it all starts with an idea. And as world peace advocate and author, Norman Cousins, once said, “A library is the delivery room for the birth of idea.” Sounds like you’re half way there!

*Nikolay*

## Contributors

Opinions expressed by contributors are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the opinions of PressReader and its management.



**Leslie Burger**

Founding partner of Library  
Development Solutions Past-director  
of Princeton Public Library

## THE INSIDER

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Editor-in-Chief: Nikolay Malyarov  
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# It's time for libraries to rewrite themselves for a sustainable future

Imagine waking up one morning and finding that our public, school, or academic library had disappeared overnight — literally vanished.

No building, no resources (physical or electronic), and no people to help you discover, learn, and use information to improve our lives, knowledge, and businesses.

It would be like being transported into the pages of Fahrenheit 451 where ignorance over knowledge was the road to an “equalized” society. Makes me shiver just to think about it.

Now I realize this is just a bad dream — a nightmare that has no basis in fact. But when I look at what's happening in this era of budget cuts, [library closures](#), and fake news' impact on information literacy, it's not that hard to wonder if libraries are facing a dystopian future.

Being an optimist, I still believe there's time to save an industry which would devastate humanity if it were gone.

But, and this is a big but, it's also true that the only ones who can save libraries are the libraries themselves. Associations can help guide them, but in the end, each library must take responsibility for keeping its doors open, its lights on, and its products and services available and relevant for its community.

To thrive in a world racked by constant and accelerating change, libraries need to rewrite themselves for a future most of us can't even imagine yet.

## The Great Rewrite is here

When one looks back at hundreds of years of media innovation, it historically consisted of inventions such as the Gutenberg Press (and movable type), recorded media, radio, the telephone, and television. These inventions, while impressive at the time of conception, were fundamentally much the same:

- They broadcast content on a one-to-one or one-to-many basis
- They were technologically very expensive to build
- They were all regulated by governments

But when the web was made [publicly-available](#) in 1993, for the first time in our history, people owned a many-to-many communications network, where millions of us could communicate with millions of others for almost no cost — a new, democratized form of media that is almost impossible for governments to regulate.

So what's so important about that? Well, according to serial entrepreneur, venture capitalist, and best-selling author, [Leonard Brody](#), it is this phenomenon that is fueling the massive changes we are experiencing in business and society today.

Our planet is being rewritten from the ground up — a complete reboot of the largest era of mass institutional change in the history of world. No industry is exempt.

Libraries, education, media, travel, finance, and healthcare, to name just a few, are all feeling the effects of this phenomenon.

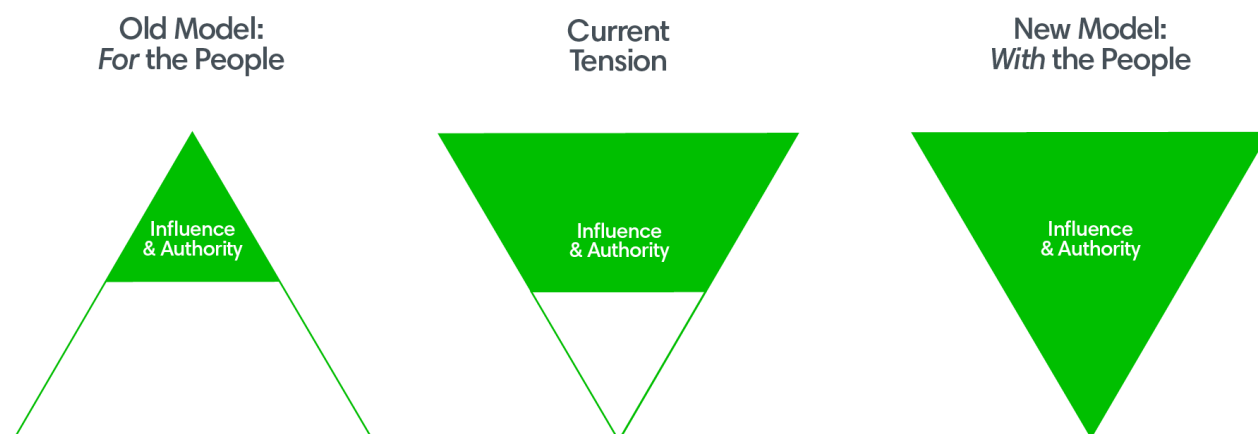
Why? Because it all comes down to power. Prior to the internet, power/authority was controlled from the top-down, whether that be from presidents, principals, priests, or publishers. Fueled by massive changes in technology and social behavior, that traditional pyramid of power has been completely inverted in almost every facet of our lives.

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Edelman research supports Brody's premise stating that there has been a fundamental shift in the relationship between those who traditionally held authority and the people they once controlled.

## A fundamental shift

Source: Edelman Trust Barometer Study



We live in a people-powered planet with a younger generation possessing that power their entire lives. And they aren't prepared to give up any of it because it gives them authority their parents never had — a power that makes them question everything and examine more closely the world around them through a new, more critical lens.

### Leadership in our rewritten world

They say that being a leader is one of the loneliest jobs in the world. It's particularly difficult when their organization is struggling to survive in our upside down world — a world where “it's all about me” generations expect no less than a highly personalized experience in every transaction and interaction with a brand.

And despite what you might think, a library is a brand and it needs a 21st century leader willing to discard the shackles of bureaucracy and lead by serving.

Best-selling author and management guru, [Gary Hamel](#), said that many brands suffer from a “clutch of core incompetencies” which stem from the tenants of bureaucracy.

*“Strategy gets set at the top. Power trickles down. Big leaders appoint little leaders. Individuals compete for promotion. Compensation correlates with rank. Tasks are assigned. Managers assess performance. Rules tightly circumscribe discretion. This is the recipe for ‘bureaucracy’, the 150-year old mashup of military command structures and industrial engineering that constitutes the operating system for virtually every large-scale organization on the planet.”*

Gary Hamel

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He goes on to say that within a bureaucracy, bold thinking and action are not encouraged and old assumptions are only questioned when the organization hits a wall. Does this sound like your library?

It's time for every library to break down the tenets of bureaucracy and embrace an entrepreneurial mindset committed to innovation.

It needs to change its management structure and culture in ways that will be, without a doubt, foreign and prickly for some.

Libraries must actively embrace change to fuel new ideas, diversify products and services, think and experiment outside the box, and look for new ways to monetize its assets and talents.

Library staff need to become less isolated, gain new perspectives of the world around them, and be willing to learn from those outside of their discipline — industries that too faced potential extinction, but were fearless enough to raze the old to raise the new.

They must take responsibility for their own future and accept the fact that funding is not a right; it's a gift.

They need to start rewriting their "library speak" to align with a new vision, replace "fundraising" with "income generation" to remind themselves and others that they are in business to not only invest in their community but in the sustainability of their own future as well.

No business, organization, or institution in the 21st century can repeat the past and expect a better future. Libraries must think like a brand, act like a brand, and market its value as successful brands do.

It's a massive undertaking to reinvent legacy institutions and lead them out of confusion and into a future of clarity and confidence, but in the end the rewards will be worth the challenges.

## Diversify to create new revenue streams

I started thinking about other industries that face the same challenges as libraries and the most obvious one was the publishing industry — specifically newspapers and magazines.

In the 20th century consumers were more than ready to pay for daily delivery of their local paper because they saw value in the product. But when the web became mainstream publishers gave away their journalism for free, expecting that digital advertising would cover the costs just as print advertising did for decades. They were wrong.

With the exception of Norway and Sweden, 20% or less of the global population are willing to pay for the same content in digital form. Why?

Because publishers had taught readers for years that digital content was free, and as much as they try to put the toothpaste back in the tube through advocacy campaigns and paywalls, consumers haven't changed their behavior. They're not buying it.

For the past 15 years, I've been saying that the survival of mainstream media depends on revenue diversification. Advertising and reader revenue alone will never sustain the industry. Period. Full stop.

A number of publishers have seen the light and are finding success through diversification and investing in content repackaging, member communities, e-commerce, and brand licensing. Others are reaping rewards that come with live events and other experiences people are willing to pay for.

In the library space, patrons have also been taught that resources are free, so trying to charge for access now would be a waste of energy and time. It also goes against libraries' view that access to content should be free.

But why does everything have to be free in a library? It doesn't and it shouldn't. Charging for ancillary

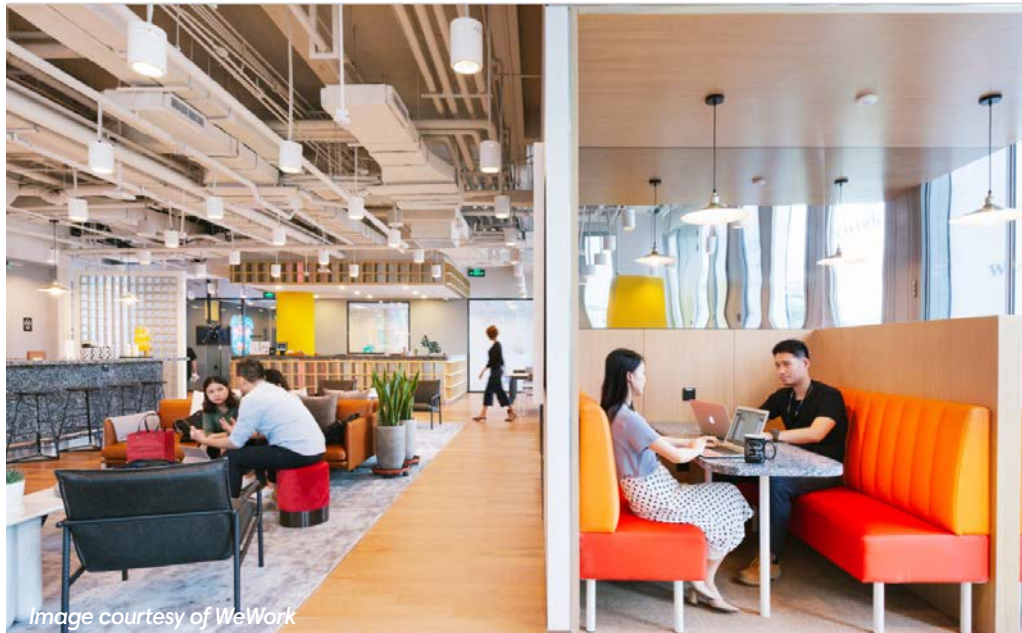
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services isn't a sin, it's a survival mechanism and thankfully some libraries are starting to realize that.

Most libraries charge fees for things like passport processing, printing, scanning, and digitizing. This is all great, but none of these are big ticket items that could bring in the much-needed cash libraries need now.

Many already rent out rooms and venues to businesses and individuals to host events or create co-working spaces. But most of these rooms are limited in design, technology, and esthetics.

Why not take that up a notch and offer premium workspaces more comparable to [WeWork](#) — a business that is booming. This will mean downsizing the physical resource area to make room, but that's going to happen eventually anyway as digital takes over. Be proactive rather than reactive to digital transformation.



Speaking of renting, why not rent out original art, musical instruments, small office equipment, and karaoke machines?

How about [making room for a coffee shop](#), a restaurant, or other alluring consumer businesses to attract more users and make money at the same time — sustainable income that can fund additional library services or staff hires? How about adding a kombucha-on-tap bar to the common space?

Why not offer historical tours for history buffs, organize city tours and live experiences for visitors, ala [Airbnb Experiences](#)? Research shows that people are much more willing to pay for experiences than things, and who would a stranger trust more for a truly local experience than a local library?

Librarians have a huge amount of expertise in many areas which could be leveraged better. Why not offer custom research, tutoring, or special classes for a fee?

Why not encourage patrons to be more sustainable and use public transit by charging for parking?

Why not offer different levels of paid and free memberships determined by the costs to deliver different services? Some [libraries already do this](#). I don't know how your library would want to segment its membership levels to suit its diverse community, but it's worth thinking about.

Those are just a few thoughts; I'm sure with a good brainstorming session you could come up with more.

To inspire you, take a look at how a couple of the more progressive libraries have diversified themselves.

### **Johns Hopkins University**

By moving beyond being recipients of institutional funding to being what Gary Hamel calls a "resource attractor" [Sheridan Libraries of Johns Hopkins University](#) are rewriting themselves by embracing entrepreneurship and revenue diversification — launching projects designed to bring in outside dollars while still advancing their core mission.

The university is fostering an environment where risk taking is encouraged — the antithesis of a bureaucratic hierarchy. Employees are encouraged to not only consult on projects, but submit their own proposals for new revenue-generating projects. They also get compensated when their ideas are chosen for implementation.

As Hamel said in [Bringing Silicon Valley Inside](#), "If an idea has merit, it will attract resources, in the form of venture capital and talent. If it doesn't, it won't."

### **Princeton Public Library**

[Princeton Public Library](#), founded in 1812, started rewriting itself in the early 2000s when it saw its stacks of printed resources being replaced by web searches and online reference sites. They saw book stores going out of business and knew that a similar fate awaited them if they didn't change themselves to accommodate a new generation of users.

In 2004 they opened their doors to a new modern library with a café (many thought was insane during the planning stages), a used bookstore, community room, and quiet zone.



Princeton Public Library Cafe courtesy of Studio Hillier LLC



They gave today's generation a more livable space, with resources organized in a way that made sense to patrons, not to the librarians who were used to the Dewey Decimal system. The library became a gathering place with entertainment, events, and language classes.

Amenities include a science and technology lab, special exhibits, children spaces, literacy areas, a STEAM studio, and a nursing room. But what really sets them apart is the premium workspaces they have with state-of-the-art technology, a business center, and special rooms for meetings, study and conferences — rooms that attract non-profit and business [revenues](#).

*“You’ll see people starting businesses in our study rooms that are created specifically for co-working. Companies are founded here all the time.”*

Brett Bonfield  
Princeton Public Library Director (2016–2019)

## Your future is in your hands

Best-selling author, Neil Gaiman said, “Libraries are our future — to close them would be a terrible, terrible mistake — it would be stealing from the future to pay for today which is what got us into the mess we’re in now.”

He’s right. But right doesn’t pay the bills.

Which is why I encourage you to diversify your funding sources to include commerce. Offer unique products and experiences that feed a patron’s passions and needs — things that they can’t get anywhere else but through you. Things that they are willing to pay for.

This means hiring new people who know how to market and sell — how to make real money that can fund a more sustainable future.

Back in 1998, Dr. Dagmar Jank, first vice-rector of FH Potsdam in Germany, recommended that [income generation training](#) should be part of the formal library studies curriculum. I decided to do a quick search of the [top graduate schools](#) for library and information studies in the US to see if they offered this in their curriculums.

I started with the University of Illinois which ranked as No. 1 in the field. When I checked out their [Master of Science and Library Information Science learning outcomes](#), there was no mention of income generation education. The same was true at the No. 2 ranked school — the University of Washington. I stopped searching after that. If you know of any schools that do include courses in revenue generation for libraries, I’d love to .

The commitment to innovate is tough because it requires a lot of courage to raze the old to raise the new, not only in terms of business model changes, but cultural transformations as well. However, that doesn’t mean one needs to start from scratch; it means reinventing what already exists into something better.

Steve Jobs was a master of reinvention. He didn’t invent the technology that turned Apple from a company on the verge of bankruptcy in 1998 into one worth over US\$100B in 2011. He reinvented what already existed at Apple and its competitors. By focusing on user experience, Steve Jobs reinvented computers, phones, cameras, tablets, music, software, and more. He changed the industry and our lives.

If the number one risk to your library is your reluctance or fear to innovate, remember what Steve Jobs said,

*“Innovation has nothing to do with how many R&D dollars you have. When Apple came up with the Mac, IBM was spending at least 100 times more on R&D. It’s not all about money. It’s about the people you have, how you’re led, and how much you ‘get it.’”*

How much does your library “get it” and what is it doing about it? I and our readers would love to hear your thoughts. [Let’s talk!](#) ●



An interview with Leslie Burger, founding partner of Library Development Solutions

## Library transformation in the 21st century

**R**ecently I was doing research for an article on how libraries are transforming themselves to better serve their patrons in the digital age. I discovered a number of academic and public institutions that diversified themselves to address the needs of today's consumer, but Princeton Public Library (PPL) went many steps further by not only diversifying their offerings, but also rewriting the age-old tenets of what a library could and should be. By challenging "common wisdom" and breaking century-old traditions, PPL imagined [the art of the](#)

[possible](#) in a sector where institutionalism typically trumped imagination.

I provided a brief case study on Princeton Public Library in that article, but I wanted to know more. So, I reached out to the library director who led PPL's transformation, raising more than a few eyeballs almost two decades ago with her progressive and unconventional vision to "explode the whole concept of what a library is" — Leslie Burger.

Here's a transcript of that interview that I hope will inspire you as much as it did me.

**Thanks so much Leslie for taking the time to chat with me about your work at Princeton Public Library and your thoughts about library transformation in the 21st century.**

**Looking back, what was the public library industry like in 2000, in terms of technology awareness and adoption?**

The web was still a relatively new thing and some in libraries saw that there were opportunities for them to harness that technology and serve people in new and different ways.

Back then, PCs were expensive and not in everyone's home, and certainly not in everyone's pocket, like they are now. Many libraries, in particular public libraries, understood that they had a significant role to play in providing equity of access to digital technology.

So libraries started to allocate funding to upgrade and purchase PCs and to provide the bandwidth needed to make sure that people could access the Internet — particularly people who couldn't afford to purchase these things on their own.

When you go into a library today, you expect to see a whole range of PCs, laptops, or tablets widely available, but back then they were still relatively scarce.

**That was the same time you came up with a great plan for Princeton Public Library. What was the inspiration behind it?**

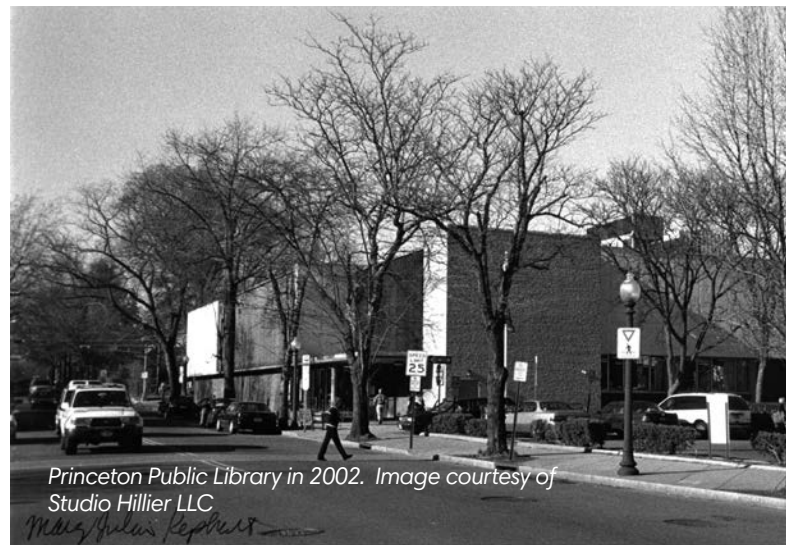
Before I went to the Princeton Public Library, I had spent time working at two US state libraries. I'd also been consulting for 10 years and had a sense that there was something going on in libraries that wasn't connecting with what I observed in the wider society as a whole. There was a big disconnect.

Back then libraries were places where you'd go to have a transactional relationship — to borrow a book, read it, and bring it back two weeks later, or to ask the reference librarian a

question. Library use was very traditional.

I began thinking about libraries less as an entry point for information and books, and more as a community partner that could help people address real-life issues and support community building. Public libraries are uniquely democratic institutions (free for all) that could provide access to information, technology, physical resources and all the things we traditionally associate with libraries. But we hadn't yet fully tapped into the potential of using our resources and expertise to impact people in a very real way — with job searches, technology instruction, adult and early literacy, after-school help, engaging programs, and civic engagement, to name a few. Some libraries got it, but a lot didn't.

I was very fortunate to be hired by Princeton to help create a new library — a project that had been stalled for 25 years.



I'd never been a library director, but I had spent some time there as the interim director and I had some ideas about how we might be able to reposition the library in the community so our project could advance.

A lot of those ideas meant that the library had to be more connected to the community, really engaging with people around issues important in Princeton at the time: reimagining

our town and its redevelopment, planning for the integration of new and future technologies, thinking about societal changes and how they were affecting library use, challenging long-held ideas about the library's services and collections, and how that should inform our thinking in planning a new library.

Not only were we thinking about how best to improve our physical space, but we were thinking about the library experience we wanted people to have when they walked through the door. The Board of Trustees was committed to the idea of building the library of the future. They trusted that I could provide the leadership to help that transformation take place. Princeton really wanted this library project to be about the future, not about a bigger, better, library of the past. And, they wanted the project to be done in five years, from concept to completion.

**How did you manage to get the carte blanche? Was there a lot of persuasion that you had to go through with all the relevant stakeholders?**

Once we agreed on the site for the new library, which turned out to be to build a new library building on the existing site, we had surmounted a major project hurdle. Up to that point there had been multiple proposed site locations along with an extensive list of reasons not to support construction. Turns out the site we occupied, a prime location in the central business district, was the perfect place.

Then the conversation turned to capital and operating funding. We were asked to raise U\$12 million in private support for the building project. The library had no significant private support, but I told the Board and governing officials not to worry; we could raise all the money. I felt confident that the concept of the new library becoming the "community's living room" would provide the traction we needed to convince

prospective donors to support us.

The last big hurdle was parking. Parking is a big issue in New Jersey and most suburban communities. There is never enough, and everyone wants their car to be adjacent to the front door. We worked closely with the mayors of Princeton Borough and Princeton Township to devise a parking solution that would create a win-win for everyone. The town built a parking garage to solve the problem. We leveraged donations that were conditional on the resolution of the parking problem to influence local decision makers.

This project also benefitted from talents from a great team of people who were in the right place at the right time. My board president was a proven real estate developer and was able to negotiate the land development deals necessary for the new library. Another member of the team was really great with details; there are at least 30,000 details you have to pay attention to when you're trying to create a library. The Princeton Borough mayor was a visionary who saw the library as the anchor for a larger redevelopment project in Princeton to make it a more walkable downtown.

And, in myself we had an out-of-the-box thinker — someone who was willing to challenge the status quo on every single aspect of library design, services, and operation, and who could talk about that in a compelling way and make people want to have it as opposed to clinging to the traditions of the past.

So, we had four people on our team who were focused on the future, who passionately believed in the project, were committed to doing everything to get it done, and a plan for doing it. We communicated exceptionally well with each other, created our message and sharpened it in a way that became compelling

for people who might not have ever thought about a new library as being an exciting thing.

**A library seeing itself as a community living room was a powerful idea at that time, but you've also created a café in the library. Those broke the two main tenets in the traditional library: no food or drink and be quiet.**

Right. When we first began talking about the café there was opposition from the community. Fear that people would spill coffee or tea on the library's books, that it would be noisy and dirty.



While the library was under construction we moved to temporary quarters in a recently vacated bookstore/café. The bookstore had moved out and the café remained after we moved in. Everyone loved the café and soon became concerned that we hadn't planned enough seating for the new library café. Moral of this story, model things you want to try — turns out people may like it.

**Looking back, what were you most proud of?**

In 2019, these things will sound simple and silly but they were big for Princeton at the time.

**We significantly increased library use.**

When I got to Princeton the number of items that were borrowed by the community had

stagnated. So, I challenged the staff to think about how they could increase borrowing. The library staff didn't buy many of the books that were on The New York Times Best Sellers' list and never purchased books about sports. The conventional wisdom was that people who live in Princeton were too smart to read books by Danielle Steel or Stephen King. But we went ahead and increased the amount of money we were spending on best sellers, and guess what happened? People in Princeton wanted to read the same stuff that everybody else in the country was reading. It was a small change, but it got more people in the library because they realized they could find and get what they were looking for.

**We offered programming for adults.**

We didn't do any kind of public programming for adults. We offered all the standard stuff that libraries were doing at that time — story hours and craft programs for children and activities for teens. But we didn't offer any programming that would get adults out of their own living rooms and into the library. The very first adult program we did featured a belly dancer. My staff was appalled that I would do something that was considered sleazy. The belly dancer came, 100 people filled a room that fit 50, the belly dancer did her thing, and next thing I knew everybody was up and out of their seats gyrating with the belly dancer and enjoying themselves.

That experience gave me the tools I needed to convince the staff to invest more in those kinds of events to get more adults into the library. We needed to reintroduce people to the library.

**We made the library a destination.**

As we put more money in programming and resources, people began to notice that the library was doing things differently. It wasn't just the same old, tired mid-century library they had always thought of. It was lively. It was vibrant. People were calling me; they were talking about it with others. They were saying things like, "Oh, you won't believe what the library is doing." That

was very key to our success — getting people to rediscover and rethink their relationship with the institution.

**And providing things that the patrons as human beings really wanted — services that they actually used.**

Yes, exactly.

We were fortunate to have a wonderful relationship with the staff at Princeton University. They were obviously early adopters of the internet with much faster internet than any public library could have hoped to have at that time, and they shared it freely with us. We were way ahead of other libraries in terms of offering people uninterrupted access to the internet that was 100 times faster than their AOL dial-up connection at home. The university provided that without charge for many years, which was wonderful.

We offered them books they wanted to read when they wanted to read them. We changed our hours to make it more convenient to come to the library. We created customer-friendly use policies. We offered after-school homework assistance and exam prep at the library, installed a Redbox DVD dispenser available 24/7, café service, career counseling, employment assistance, citizenship prep and legal advice on immigration issues, hosted community forums about race, hosted a human rights and environmental film festival, and embraced new technologies to enhance the service experience.

**What do you wish you had done differently?**

I might have designed the building in a slightly different way if I knew then what I know now, but I think generally for where we were at that time, that was an appropriate design, and it has held up remarkably well in the 16 years that it's been open. I would have made the design a little more architecturally interesting. The building was designed with maximum flexibility and with the thought that every 10-15 years that the interior space would be redone. We just finished our "2-Reimagine" project in 2017. That project completely redesigned the library's adult space and was a test of the flexibility of the original design.

**Interesting. Shifting gears a little bit. What do you think is the role of associations like ALA, or IFLA is today, and how has it changed over the past few years?**

ALA and IFLA have to energize their members and mobilize them to be the change agents who will transform libraries for the future. Like every industry, libraries are dealing with major disruption and the choices that our working professionals and leaders make today will determine the long term survival of libraries or their demise. Becoming a transformational change agent may not always coincide with an individual member's interests which may be linked to their own professional advancement or exploring an esoteric aspect of librarianship. ALA and IFLA need to focus members on big-picture thinking that will shape libraries for the future. If our professional associations fail to energize their ranks and focus them on the issues that are vitally to the people who use and can benefit from libraries we will not survive.

Part of that change can occur by disrupting the way our professional associations are organized. I'm not familiar with what IFLA is doing in that area but certainly the next generation of librarians in ALA are pushing back on some of the long-held organizational structures, and saying, "That doesn't work for us. We want to do it differently." As long as the

*The new Princeton Public Library (2004). Image courtesy of Studio Hillier LLC*



associations remain focused on big, important issues I think they'll be okay, but it requires vigilance on the part of association managers who need to think about the value proposition of association membership and running conferences.

**Going back 13 years when you were president of the ALA, what was your experience? What goals did you want to accomplish, and how did you go about achieving those?**

I came in to the presidency with a very specific agenda with things I wanted to accomplish. I was told on several occasions that it wasn't possible to do everything on my list in the time that we had. But I'm not a person who accepts "not possible" as an answer.

So, I worked with closely with ALA leaders and staff to make sure that the things that I wanted to do would be completed during the 24 months I had to advance my agenda. That included the launch of the ALA Emerging Leaders program, the establishment of "[ilovelibraries.org](http://ilovelibraries.org)" — a website about libraries and the amazing things that go on there for the public, a conversation about setting a national library agenda, and specific ideas for transforming libraries.

As ALA president you automatically have positional power, but try getting 60,000 people to agree on anything and one quickly is humbled by what it takes to get things done. I used my abilities as a persuasive leader to build consensus and support for my agenda. I did as much as I could do in the time allotted to me. ALA has continued the library transformation theme with its Libraries Transform campaign. I try to have some influence in keeping that discussion going.

**We'll come back to transformation in a few minutes. Moving on...As you know, there's been a growing trend in the proliferation of fake news and declining information literacy. In your opinion, how important is it to provide a diverse and global selection of newspapers and magazines in today's libraries? And**

**what do you see as the core value of those publications?**

I think newspapers and magazines are very important, probably more so than ever before. Every day we learn about another newspaper or magazine that has folded; it's frightening. Because what I see is the consolidation of "news" into the hands of a few influential publishers who have the potential to shape our views and manipulate information. A free press is essential to a healthy democracy. But the challenge is that now there are many alternatives for getting news and some are eager to make it up in order to further their own agenda. We also have a populace who is far less discerning when it comes to reading the news and who easily falls prey to disinformation campaigns.

Libraries need to position themselves to be trusted news and information sources. That means in-library and remote access to print and digital newspaper and magazine subscriptions with unlimited licensing at a price that libraries can afford. Any library — college, university, public, or school — could bring the news to life in the library by bringing in commentators or hosting conversations about something that's in the news. During the 2000 presidential election we invited our community to watch the election night returns together at the library and asked a well-respected political scientist to moderate and share her insights about the results. I offered to keep the library open until the election was over. The turnout for this event was amazing, standing room only. People were engaged in conversation and debate and as the evening wore on distressed by the outcome. At 2 a.m. we closed the library since it was clear that the election would not be decided that day. The library played a vital role in helping our community understand the news and see history in the making.

Right now US libraries have a great opportunity to offer civic education (it's no longer taught in public schools), to play that role in their community and be the place that brings news,

issues and people together, to help them understand our world, shape an informed point of view, and work toward a better future. That's a really powerful idea. And certainly, a freely available diverse and global selection of newspapers and magazines in libraries can help shape that conversation.

Perhaps this upends the library's traditional neutral role. But I think the era of neutrality is over. I'm an advocate of getting accurate news in the hands of people. Get them talking about it, and help them understand what they need to do to be an informed citizen.

**There's a lot of debate these days about free access to information. For every paid source, there're a few dozen free sources available on the exact same subject. So how does that correlate to a publisher's need and desire to be paid for their content? Do you have any thoughts on how the two positions can be reconciled in some way?**

I'm not an expert on this by any means, but I believe that writers and content producers and the people that distribute that content need to be compensated for what they're doing. The information distribution model today is much more sophisticated and allows for information to be shared more freely. But yes, they do deserve to be paid for the work that they're doing, and the intellectual content that they're creating for us.

Paywalls discourage people from reading the content, so that is not a solution. Social media providers could compensate the content creators on behalf of their readers, but that may mean the content is not accurate or reliable. Governments could establish content compensation funds that would provide offsets to the cost of content creation. All of these ideas would be complicated to administer.

The cost model can't be so prohibitive that libraries can't afford to buy the information. The New York Times in-library digital subscription is a good model. Anyone in the library can access the content with a digital device and a limited number of people are able to actually access the online content and read it at home. The New York Times has been great at testing new models for content development and pricing.

**Do you see a role for associations in lobbying for libraries, setting rules of the game, or setting certain parameters around what the cost of that should be?**

Yes, the associations should work with publishers to develop a product and pricing model that gets the news out to people and in their hands. Enabling libraries to push content out to their patrons is something that's beneficial.

Beneficial to libraries and the role they play in society, to democracy as a whole for its survival, to all of us who need to be informed, and to the publishers to get content distributed more widely. So, yes, I think the associations can play a really important role.

**What we're seeing is publishers trying to build their direct consumer businesses through libraries, viewing patrons as targets for acquisition. But library patrons are often a very different audience than regular subscribers. Many patrons use library services because they either can't afford to pay for news, or they want to have access to a broader range of sources.**

I think everybody needs to work together understanding that the number of people who are using libraries is far less than the number of potential subscribers, publishers could have for their newspapers.

**Absolutely. In the face of all the technological changes we're seeing, changes in consumer**



**behavior and user expectations, along with funding cuts, what do you think libraries need to do to sustain themselves going forward?**

There's the inherent eternal problem of libraries never having enough money. Many never recovered from the recession. They're not even at their pre-recession level, so they're hurting. But what that means is you can't do business as usual. You have to make tough decisions about the things you've always done versus the right thing to do going forward.

So, for me, a lot of it is about change management and transformation. Some of the things libraries are doing they should have stopped doing a long time ago. Most of them are getting pretty smart about it. But maintaining hugely extensive reference collections, for example, that no one is looking at anymore: Stop. And suddenly you're going to have \$75,000 back in your budget. Complex practices around borrowing materials, interlibrary loans, and overdue notices — stuff that takes a whole lot of staff time — these should stop. Many libraries have eliminated overdue fines because they're not worth the costs and they're a barrier to access.

I think the point we're at right now is that we're examining basic practices and asking what are the things that make sense to move forward with, and what are the legacy services that we can let go of because they've run their course. They're just not things that people want anymore.

**You've worked with over 150 libraries in helping them transform themselves. What were the biggest challenges that you faced with libraries that you helped transform?**

It's about change, resistance to change, doing things differently, and thinking differently about

the relationship with the community. Being afraid to take risk, being able to say what's really needed, and being able to fight for what you believe is right to serve your community. Failure to understand the community and to act in an appropriate way. I think those are the big issues.

**And what are some of the best practices that help to overcome that? When is the light bulb moment when you see in their eyes, "Oh, yes, now we get it"?**

I think it is when they see some immediate, positive reaction to something they've done. It may be something that they were resistant to trying, and they try it, and all of a sudden, it's hugely popular, and they say, "Wow, that was really great." So, it's kind of like dipping your toe in the water, and getting some positive feedback, and saying, "It's okay. The world's not going to end if I do this. Maybe we can try something else." It's about not being afraid.

**In terms of governance, and management structure, has there been any real change to those in the last 20 years, or are we still seeing what existed before the age of the internet?**

Because of the influx of younger library workers, there is more of an emphasis on teamwork and collaborative projects. And with some libraries, there is less hierarchy now.

Millennials work differently than baby boomers. And that's a good thing. I think each group is benefiting happily from their intergenerational interactions, but also learning from each other.

I also think there's more of an emphasis on project management and being able to take it from inception to delivery. So, I think it's a little more action-oriented, and that's a good thing.

**If there's one piece of advice that you'd give to a library (public and academic) what would it be?**

Listen. Listen to your community. Listen to the people who are using your library. Pay attention to what they're doing inside your building. Pay attention to what they're doing outside your building. Think about the trends in your community, or on your campus, or what you're reading about in the newspaper that can help you turn your programs into something that's responsive and supportive of what people need right now.

**In every industry and every vertical that we work in or with, be it publishing or travel and others, the reoccurring theme is listening to people, listening to the individuals who are the customers, the patrons, et cetera. It's slowly becoming more of an action item as opposed to just a topic of conversation. That's encouraging to see, but what's interesting for us is that wherever we are as service providers, we're still talking to that same individual. And if we don't understand what that person wants and needs, and how we can help that person, we won't be able to get to that person at the end of the day.**

I live in New York City, and I get a lot of my information about new product development from the ads on the subway. Every week I see ads for new start-up businesses — whether they're amenities delivered directly to your home, like meal plans, or products mailed to you like ladies' shaving kits. I'm endlessly fascinated by the number of new start-ups, and why they exist and what informed that decision. Who said it would be a better shaving experience for me if I deal with this company that's going to send me a razor and cartridges directly to my home rather than going to the drug store? I'm sure that a lot of these start-ups have done focus groups and surveys and market analysis to inform their products, but ultimately someone is making a

bet that a different, more convenient product is worth the try.

Librarians need to do a better job of listening to their customers and an even better job of anticipating their needs and responding quickly.

**Do you think libraries are doing a good enough job communicating their value that they bring to the community?**

Absolutely not. Some of that has to do with the demise of the local newspaper. Libraries were dependent on local newspapers to publish notices or run press releases about their offerings. Now that the papers are gone, they've lost that outlet. Libraries have to utilize new options — social media, email newsletters, paid ads on Google, and targeted marketing and promotion campaigns. Some are doing it, but some don't have a clue how to do it, and so I think that's a problem.

**You spent a lot of time being a librarian and working with libraries as a consultant. What's next for you?**

Hopefully retirement. :) I'll continue to work with libraries in a consulting capacity and try to do my small part in transforming the clients that I have now, and helping them see a new future.

**Thank you so much Leslie for this very educational and insightful interview. I learned a lot and I'm sure many of our readers have as well.**

For those readers who want to learn more or get some further guidance from Leslie before she retires, you can reach her here:

Leslie Burger, Partner  
**Library Development Solutions**  
[www.librarydevelopment.com](http://www.librarydevelopment.com)  
[lburger@librarydevelopment.com](mailto:lburger@librarydevelopment.com)



**Leslie Burger, founding partner of Library Development Solutions**

## About Leslie Burger

Leslie Burger is the founding partner of [Library Development Solutions](#), a New York City based consulting firm founded in 1991.

Until January 2016 she was the executive director of the Princeton Public Library (NJ) where she helped plan, design and secure the funding required for a new 55,000 square foot library that opened in 2004. That project was the anchor and driver for a downtown redevelopment project that resulted in a mixed-use building, parking garage and public square. During her last 18-months as Princeton's executive director, she led the effort for Princeton's "2-Reimagine" project, a gut renovation of the library's primary space for adults including the overall concept and design, securing community support, and raising US\$3.2M in private funding. A proven fundraiser, Leslie raised more than US\$31M during her tenure at the Princeton Public Library.

Through her consulting practice and employment Burger has dedicated her entire career to transforming libraries. In addition to leading the Princeton Public Library, she served in leadership positions at the Bridgeport (CT) Public Library, Connecticut and NJ State Libraries. In her consulting practice she's worked with more 150 libraries on strategic planning, community assessments, building evaluations and programs, organizational improvements and design, program evaluation and implementation. Leslie is also an adjunct faculty member at Rutgers where she teaches management and leadership in the Library and Information Science concentration in the School of

Communication and Information Master of Information Science Program.

Leslie served as president of the 65,000 member American Library Association from July 2006 through June 2007 where she sponsored a variety of initiatives focused on helping libraries transform communities they serve. She also served as president of the New Jersey and Connecticut Library Associations.

Leslie attended library school at the University of Maryland in College Park, Maryland and also has a master's degree in organizational behavior from the University of Hartford, West Hartford, CT. She received her BS from Southern Connecticut State College.

She is the recipient of many honors and awards including:

- Beta Phi Mu, Library Science Honor Society
- YWCA of Princeton, Tribute to Women Award
- NY Times Librarian of the Year
- University of Maryland, College of Information Studies, Alumna of the Year
- Southern Connecticut State University, Outstanding Alumna
- Rotary of Princeton, Community Service Award
- NJ Library Association, Librarian of the Year 2017

Leslie is a regular contributor to library publications including a monthly column in *American Libraries* (July 2006 — June 2007) and "Libraries for All Seasons and All Reasons," *American Libraries*, March 2008. ●

# The future of academic libraries in the experience economy

**B**ack in 2012 an [OCLC \(Online Computer Library Center\)](#) study found that most academic librarians thought the primary reason students and staff used their services (borrowing materials) would shift to using the library to access information online. And they were, of course, right.

There's been a dramatic change in the way people discover and access content — whether it's videos, music, news media, or peer-reviewed journals. But it's not just about smartphones and tablets versus printed newspapers, journals, and glossy magazines. It's about immediacy, relevancy, experience, and trust.

It's about giving students, researchers, and faculty access to the most relevant information in a way that makes sense to them as individuals.

*Higher education is shifting because its core constituents — students are starting to behave more like customers and are less forgiving of some of the inefficient and ineffective aspects of the academy not tailored for a strong customer experience.”*

Andrew Roth, President Emeritus  
Notre Dame College

This shift has had a major impact on the business models behind many industries including airlines, hotels, cars, newspapers, magazines, literature, movies, music, groceries, and clothing. These models have been transformed from owning to sharing, from buying things to buying experiences, from paying for the whole to paying for a piece, and from individual subscriptions to all-you-can-consume.

Fundamental changes in human behavior are the catalysts behind these transformations and libraries are not immune to them. They must evolve quickly and transform their own archaic business practices and models or be left behind.

## If you build it, will they come?

Brick and mortar libraries constantly compete with the internet for people's time and attention. And as more and more students use [Google and other web sources](#) for their research over library resources, the closer to obsolescence the institution comes.

*“Undergraduates’ well-documented reliance on Google for academic research is strongly supported by the results of this longitudinal cohort study. In each semester, at least one-third of the participants said they started their research on Google or another search engine, with more than two-thirds starting there as first-semester freshmen. Similarly, at least 25 percent of students in any given semester said they used web sources for the majority of the information in their papers, with 70 percent doing so in their first semester.”*

Andrew Roth, President Emeritus  
Notre Dame College  
Undergraduates' Use of Google vs.  
Library Resources  
A Four-Year Cohort [Study](#)



So if the world's knowledge is within reach of a student with a keyboard, do they really need libraries anymore?

According to a recent study by the Association of College and Research Libraries the resounding answer is, "Yes!" Four years of research showed there is a positive correlation between the use of an academic library and a student's success.

- Use of academic library spaces relates positively to student learning, retention, and success
- Library instruction adds value to a student's long-term academic experience, and according to the aforementioned Cohort study, helps shift students' research behavior from searching the web to exploring library resources
- Libraries also promote academic rapport and student engagement

The academic library has much to offer students, but all of that value will be for naught if students aren't drawn to it. And if we've learned anything from the prolific research

about GEN Ys and Zs (many of whom are enrolled or about to enroll in college or university), their behaviors and expectations are nothing like their older counterparts.

And if truth be told, they're not really like each other either when it comes to learning. Yes, they are both digital natives that demand immediacy, and highly personalized (relevant) experiences. But while millennials prefer 2-way learning experiences between faculty and themselves, GEN Zs have a shorter attention span and crave technology-enhanced learning.

Therefore, to attract and enhance the learning of these similar, but different students, libraries need to start to think outside the book and act more like 21st century consumer-focused brands. This means:

- Switching gears, from a collection-centric institution to a person-centric experience that addresses the unique needs of their diverse student body
- Making library services and content available in an

individually-relevant way, not a demographically-targeted way

- Focusing on the discovery experience and adapting to changes in student behavior over their academic lifetime, because those behaviors will continue to change

### Shift from a collection-centric institution to a person-centric experience

There are over 60 billion webpages indexed by Google. That's more than we could ever hope to read, organize, or even pay attention to. So, although content may be king, it's the distribution solutions that ultimately make that content discoverable.

The video and music streaming industries learned long ago that while people are interested in particular pieces of content, it's the way that content is discovered and delivered that's most important.

Anywhere, anytime, unlimited access to relevant media on all devices — laptops, tablets, desktops, and phones — is not only wanted, it's demanded by younger generations. And students today will accept no less with the written word.

## Open Educational Resources (OER)

Open Educational Resources along with more affordable course content initiatives have started to pave the way to a better student experience, and libraries must play a leadership role in that. In their institutional OER programs libraries need to find innovative ways to let students self-direct their learning and access content when, where, and how they need it.

Libraries need to invest in more comprehensive, user-friendly platforms that can help students navigate through an ocean of data and discover the right content at the right time.

## Digital Media

In the past, libraries thought that offering a small selection of printed media along with a few select digital editions of periodicals and newspapers was sufficient to support the student body and faculty. At that time, Newspapers in Education programs were considered adequate for meeting the limited demand for local and national news content.

But today's expectations far exceed these antiquated single-source solutions. The world of knowledge and news is now at students' fingertips and they expect unlimited, uninhibited, free

access to all it has to offer through the library. Unfortunately, the chaotic nature of the web makes discovery of relevant information almost impossible, despite the best efforts of librarians.

It's time for schools and librarians to critically analyze the relationships between digital information, audiences, and platforms and give their students unfettered, relevantly-curated access to the world's digital content — anytime, anywhere.

Now that's an extremely large ask and one that libraries can't even hope to answer on their own. Which is why technology partners are critical collaborators in making sense of a senseless digital universe.

Just like Netflix answered it for video, Spotify for music, and Amazon for books, Overdrive, Google Scholar, Academic Search Premier, and PressReader have the answers for eBooks, scholarly literature, journals, and newspapers and magazines.

Platforms that aggregate content from tens of thousands of trusted sources making it easy for students to access information through multiple portals and authentication methods (e.g. IP addresses, referral URLs, geo-fencing, etc.)



## Make library services and content available in an individually-relevant way

*“Content without discovery is like playing chess without a board.”*

Sarah Richards  
Content Design

### Help them find the right content

The music and video industries have adapted to new ways people consume content — by individual songs instead of albums, or by binge-watching a series instead of waiting for weekly episodes.

Newspapers and magazines use [aggregated platforms](#) to facilitate distribution and discovery of content in a myriad of forms.

What these platforms all have in common is their use of machine learning to curate content — a strategy that is [preferred by the majority of people](#), particularly the younger or tech-savvy ones.

For example, in terms of news media, researchers at [Reuters](#) learned that people value the “independence of algorithms” — believing them to be less biased or swayed by editorial and political agendas. They also like the fact that content is selected based on their personal reading habits.

And people who use news aggregators believe that algorithms helped introduce them to a broader range of content and brands based on their interests and preferences, which are more topic-driven than bias-guided.

*“It gets a variety of things like I’m interested in certain topics that I probably wouldn’t find or I’d have to search for it myself so it’s like a one stop shop of things that interest me.”*

Focus group participant  
[Brand and trust in a fragmented news environment](#)

Algorithmic curation targets an audience of one — an important distinction in the era of “[it’s all about me](#).” Because content that isn’t personal is likely not relevant. And if it’s not relevant, it’s not useful.

In the past, delivering the right content to the right audience relied heavily on demographic data, but those days are long gone. Getting it right today is about making it personal.

### Be a destination, not a path to one

Companies like Amazon and Uber taught digital natives that everything could be had with the touch of a button. No wonder they expect magic for free. If it works that way for their favorite brands, why not in libraries? Welcome to the instant gratification generations!

Libraries have long been places to read, study, and work. But in today’s [Experience Economy](#), they need to be much more.

They need to inspire, entertain, and engage. They need to become central hubs that facilitate learning in all its forms (face-to-face, experiential, online, etc.), peer-to-peer and peer-to-faculty collaboration, and sharing.

They need to be experiential destinations where the act of discovery is exciting and educational. They need to foster a sense of community inside and outside of the physical building.

Looking at start-ups like [WeWork](#) who made the idea of co-working in shared spaces so popular, it’s clear that libraries were there first and some are taking it to the next level. In the [United Kingdom](#), a number of libraries have taken on new roles, “providing maker spaces or research data services.” They’re more than just shared spaces, they’re spaces where students can meet to hypothesize, collaborate, and experiment to further their own learning, while creating something new.

### It's about what happens, not what you find

Grocery stores offer an interesting lesson to libraries. What were once places to simply look for and buy food, are being transformed into [Living Businesses](#), putting customer experience and relevancy at the top of their agenda.



#### The whole Whole Foods experience

*Whole Foods, a popular high-end supermarket known for organic vegetables and free-range meat, has made shopping an experience. When I visit, I first must walk through the bakery and the floral department. I'm greeted by bakers and the chefs. I'm offered samples.*

*I'm immediately brought into their world and encouraged to stay. The aisles are designed to bring me along on a journey that leads me to consider new grocery items I hadn't written on my list.*

*Self-service salad bars and hot food serving stations give me more control, more personalization. Sometimes I try the new thing, sometimes I don't.*

*Either way, I know that it is a place to go when I want to discover something new.*

*Nikolay*

From store design, to online shopping, to subscription delivery services, it's all about making the shopping experience less stressful and more rewarding for the consumer. Libraries of the future should take note.

New resources, spaces, and technologies will help librarians engage students in a way that feels individual, personalized, and helpful. Wrapping that in an environment that puts the student first, will make them feel right at home.

*"Remaining relevant and accessible in the digital space means competing with the seamless experiences students are used to in the rest of their lives."*

Ben Hickman

Author: University libraries need to start putting the student first ([The Guardian](#))

Research Director, Alterline



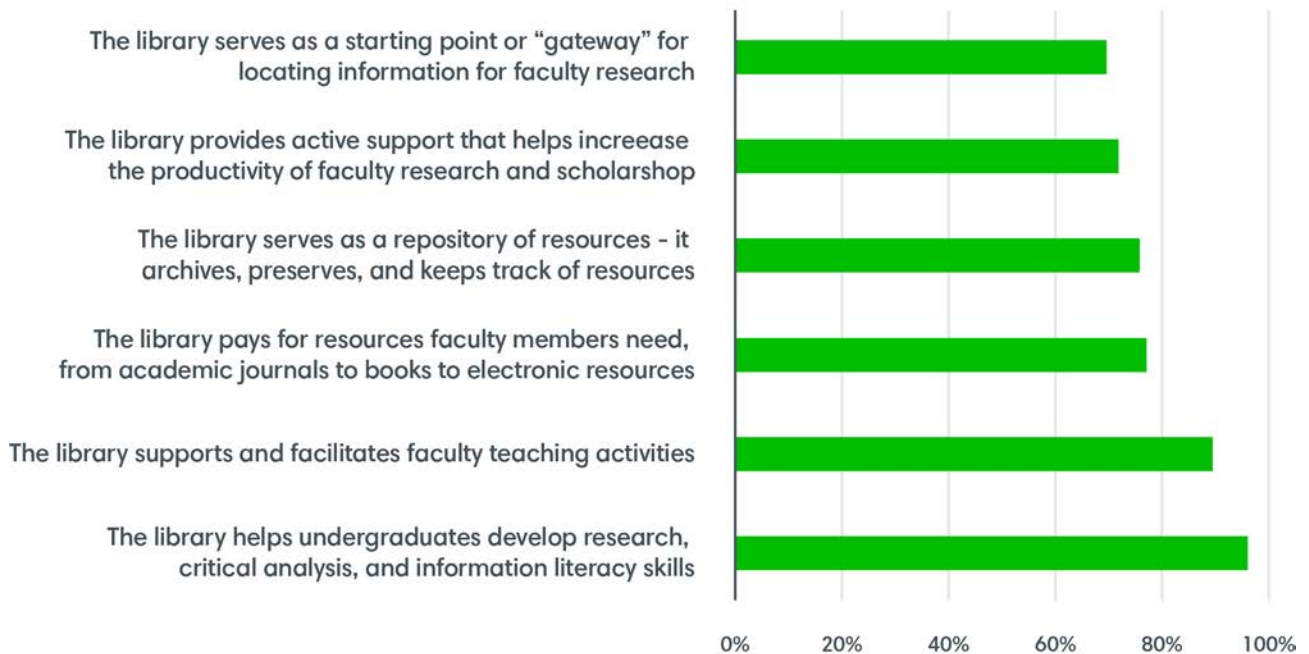
## One brick at a time

Look around; a lot of libraries have the foundations necessary to make it all happen. Because it's not about rebuilding libraries from the ground up, it's about adapting what librarians are already doing and evolving to think about users as the "ME generations" where personalized experiences and services are in high demand.

Unfortunately not enough academic libraries are focusing on the person and their experience, being more wrapped up in their own priorities — priorities driven by legacy paradigms of what a library is or should be.

## Service priorities of academic libraries in the US

Source: Ithaka S+R 2016



Every priority listed in the Ithaka survey results are internal library goals rather than student or faculty goals. It's clear that while libraries and librarians emphasize research capabilities and one-on-one education, they're not as concerned with the overall user experience.

### Academic Library Trend Watch

The mantra that "librarians need to get the right content in front of the right student, at the right time, through the right channels, at the right price" still holds true, but it's just table stakes in academia.

Over the next few years, academic and research libraries will face a number of challenges. They'll have to improve digital literacy and make services and resources more accessible. They'll have to adapt entire organizations to modern student behavior while improving library integration with other parts of their institution. They'll also have to contend with increasing political pressures, budget constraints, and demands for radical changes in service.

Here's where we at PressReader think those factors will take libraries in the next few years. I would love to hear your thoughts on this. [Let's talk!](#)

## 2018

Research data  
management

Adopting new technology

Recognizing and valuing the  
user experience

## 2019

Reimagining library patrons  
as content creators

Considering online identities  
and developing  
personalized experiences

Rethinking library spaces as  
collaborative makerspaces

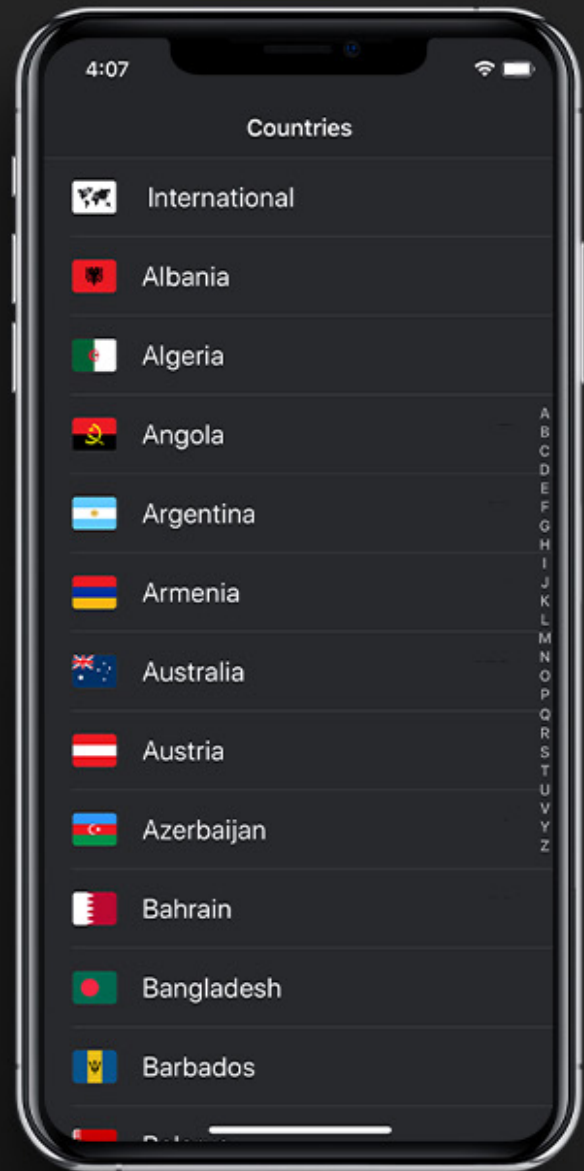
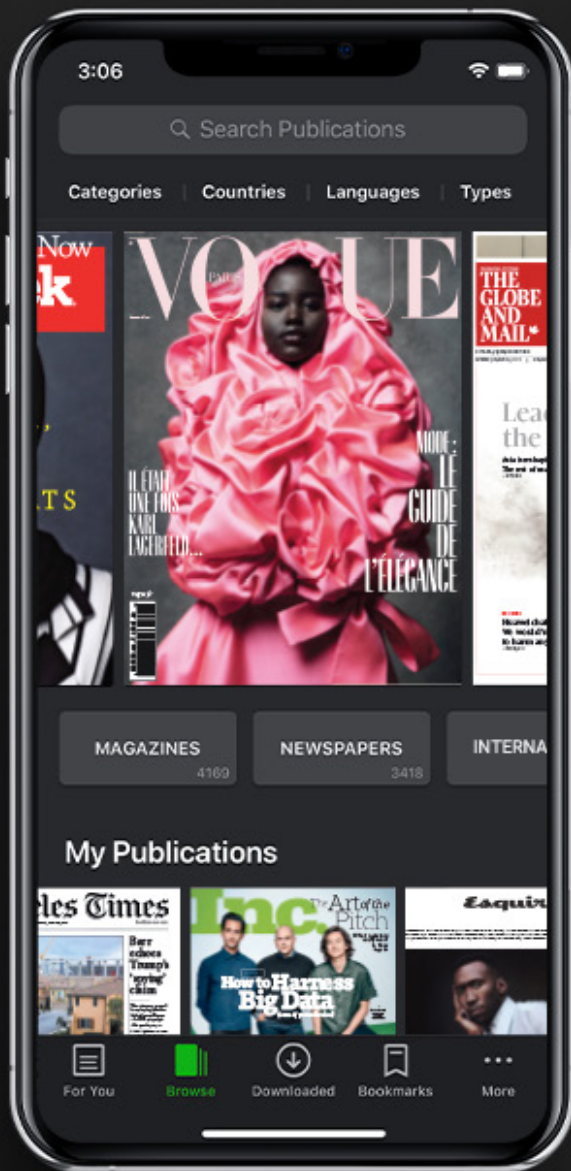
## 2020

Implementing smart  
discovery tools

Communication with  
patrons through technology

Collaborating across institutions  
and across industries to create  
seamless experiences

Integrating artificial intelligence  
into the discovery process



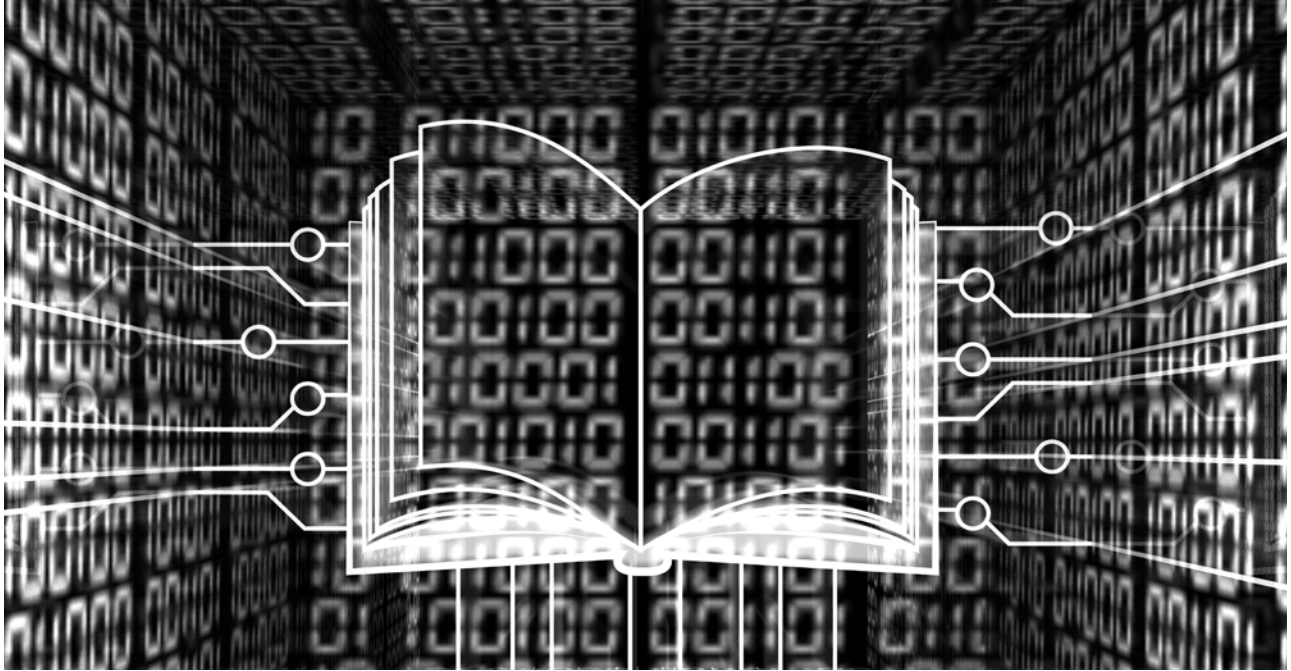
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[Learn more!](#)



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# The impact of advanced technologies on libraries and education

I've always been a fervent supporter of innovation and I believe that Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Blockchain are two of the most exciting innovations of the 21st century. They will, quite frankly, revolutionize the world as we know it.

Which is why it's important for us to understand them and their potential. And we need to respect the speed at which they are advancing and start thinking of ways to harness their power for good.

## Artificial Intelligence

Working in a technology-driven company and experiencing firsthand how fast the world is evolving, I like to pay attention to what Google's director of engineering, Ray Kurzweil, is forecasting about our future. I may not always agree with his

predictions, but his [track record](#) has been quite remarkable.

In his 1990 book, [The Age of Intelligent Machines](#), Kurzweil predicted the explosive adoption of the internet, wearables, and that Artificial Intelligence (AI) would beat the world's best chess players by the year 2000. That actually happened in 1997.

He also predicted two years ago that by 2029, computers will have human-level intelligence, "What's actually happening is [machines] are powering all of us. They're making us smarter. They may not yet be inside our bodies, but, by the 2030s, we will connect our neocortex, the part of our brain where we do our thinking, to the cloud."

Since then, AI has been feared and revered by the smartest minds on the planet. In 2014, renowned physicist and cosmologist, Stephen Hawking, [said](#), "The development

of full Artificial Intelligence could spell the end of the human race. It would take off on its own, and re-design itself at an ever-increasing rate. Humans, who are limited by slow biological evolution, couldn't compete, and would be superseded."

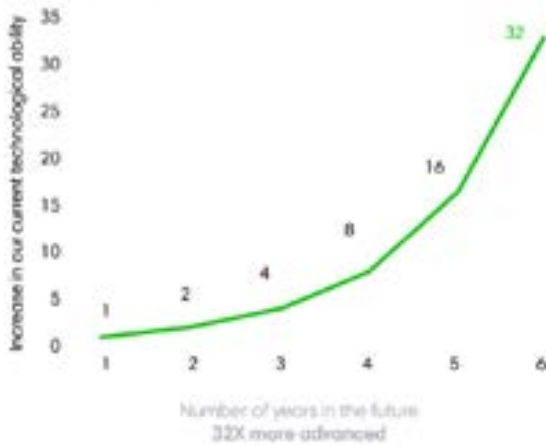
But, the ever-optimistic Kurzweil downplays the threats, preferring to believe that connecting AI to our brains will make us funnier, better at music, and even sexier, "We're going to expand our minds and exemplify all the things that we value in humans to a greater degree."

It's hard to fathom sometimes what the future will actually hold for us. With [computers doubling their capabilities](#) every 12-18 months, what does that mean in terms of our ability to comprehend the impact technology will have in our lifetime? In only 10 years, it will be 1000 times more advanced than it is today.

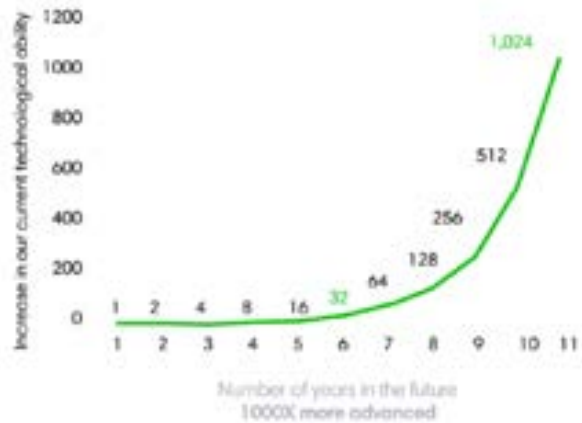
## Human perspective of technological advanced

Source: [TheEmergingFuture.com](http://TheEmergingFuture.com)

### in five years



### in ten years



What will it do to society, libraries, schools, businesses, governments, and our planet? Will we be ready for it?

Although I strongly believe in the power of innovation, I must admit I also have some apprehensions about the exponential pace of technology advancement — technology that could be a powerful weapon if exploited by malicious people, businesses, and governments. But then again, since the beginning of time, innovation has been a double-edged sword that could be put to good use or abused.

And let's not forget, we've been at crossroads like this before — think stem cell research and biotechnology (e.g. cloning). Both of these innovations have been regulated around the world, along with many others.

So instead of worrying about something we really can't stop, it's time we put our fears aside and work together to put the necessary safeguards in place to protect us, while still allowing innovation to evolve and help create a better world for us all.

AI is not science fiction or a topic just for geeks. Citizens everywhere must engage in this discussion

and debate. None of us can afford to be ignorant.

## What will AI mean for libraries?

Back in March of 1993, Kurzweil wrote a column for *Library Journal* called *The Changing Library*. In it he talked about what the library of the future might look like.

“With books in virtual form, transmitted readily through the communications ether, the emerging virtual library will not need to be housed in a building.

“... computers will continue to facilitate the efficiency of administration, but this human-directed function will not go away. The last two categories of library service — knowledge finding and pedagogy — will become the primary focus of the librarian. Although computers will provide competition in these roles, until such time as **computers are capable of matching our intelligence**, the role of humans in the process of managing and imparting knowledge will remain central.”

2029 is the date where this “intelligence matching” will occur according to the futurist, and 2045 will be the year of *Singularity*: “The point in time when all the advances in technology, particularly in AI, will lead to **machines that are smarter than human beings.**”

According to Kurzweil, “The codification of knowledge and the process of enhancing human learning will be the cornerstones of the next phase of human history. In the second industrial revolution, the wealth and power of nations will be based on nonmaterial resources, by the ability to create and facilitate knowledge. Seen in this light, **the librarian is a natural leader for the age of knowledge** that is now unfolding.”

In an AI world, the human touch will continue to be critically important.

There’s been a lot of angst about the loss of jobs due to AI and other technologies, but Kurzweil sees a future full of opportunity. In an interview with *Fortune*, he was asked how he would respond to this fear, “Well, don’t worry, for every job we eliminate, we’re going to create more jobs at the top of the skill ladder.”

When asked what those new jobs would be, he said, “Well, I don’t know. We haven’t invented them yet.”

I’m not keen to be the first in line to have nanobots integrated with my neocortex, but I am excited about how AI can help us perform beyond the natural limitations of our biological brains.

- Imagine being able to learn more, learn faster, build and understand complex models, extrapolate data, and explore virtual and augmented realities in our heads.
- Imagine the research that could come from virtually unlimited access to information with no keyboards required.
- Imagine a superior user experience for patrons and students with the highest quality content in the most engaging environment, sans fake news.

I can already see it!

As much as I admire and respect the late Professor Hawking, living in fear of technology destroying the human race isn’t something I want to spend my time worrying about. Instead, I’d much rather prescribe to Kurzweil’s theory that through AI, we will become better and smarter global citizens sooner than we could imagine because of the [law of accelerating returns](#).

So, instead of worrying about *I Robot* taking over the world, let’s work **now** to put the safeguards in place that protect us from the abuse of technology and embrace the opportunities unparalleled human-machine synthesis will bring to libraries, research, education, and our communities.

## Blockchain

As much as I believe blockchain has the potential to help libraries and academics mitigate internet-induced risks, the technology is still in the experimental phase and needs some really smart pioneers to shake it out and evolve it into something more useable by individual libraries and schools.

But I also believe that it is imperative that we understand it now so we can plan for its adoption when the time is right — time that can sneak up on you when you least expect it. Will you be ready?

Global management firm, McKinsey & Company developed an interesting [discussion guide](#) for organizations to assess their ability to act in a disruption journey. For some it will be motivating, while others will feel a dreaded sense of déjà vu as it reminds them how they perceived the internet when it was in its “detectable” phase back in the 90s, and how that led to where they are now.

## Technological Disruption Phases

Source: *An incumbents guide to digital disruption (McKinsey.com)*

The disruption is:	DETECTABLE Faint signals with lots of noise	CLEAR Emergence of a validated business model	INEVITABLE Critical mass of adoption achieved	NEW NORMAL At scale and mature
Common barriers	<p>Myopia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overconfidence</li> <li>• Willful ignorance i.e. not looking for, or wanting to see, disruptive trends</li> <li>• Entrenchment in orthodoxy</li> </ul>	<p>Pain Avoidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reluctance to endure pair of upfront cost</li> <li>• Unwillingness to cannibalize the core business</li> <li>• Putting short-term results ahead of long-term value</li> </ul>	<p>Inertia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Old centers of power lock in increasingly scarce resources</li> <li>• Legacy cost base becomes an anchor</li> <li>• New initiatives get lip service but little actual commitment</li> </ul>	<p>Fit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of people or capabilities to compete in the new world</li> <li>• Likelihood that you're too late to the game</li> <li>• Unwillingness to make tough ownership decisions</li> </ul>

Given the financial frenzy over bitcoin, it's pretty evident that blockchain is now in the detectable phase of its evolution. There is no verified business model yet, but there is an awful lot of noise. This is great news because it gives us the opportunity to learn from our past mistakes, so that we don't find ourselves, once again, on the wrong side of another major trend.

### The early movers and shakers in library blockchain solutions

It's hard to find an industry that isn't at least experimenting with blockchain technology. From finance, to music, travel, publishing, real estate, retail, insurance, healthcare, advertising, government, law enforcement, and even gun tracking, there are so many players coming and going in the space, it's hard to stay on top it all.

So it's no wonder that academia and libraries are getting into the game. Sony Global Education's educational platform uses the IBM [blockchain](#) to facilitate teachers and professors sharing information regarding students' achievements and progress.

[Learning Machine](#) uses blockchain technology to create, manage, and issue academic records that can be verified anywhere in the world.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) started [issuing diplomas using blockchain](#) technology in late 2017.

A team of Oxford academics led by Joshua Broggi (founder of Woolf Development), launched the first [blockchain-powered university](#) — Woolf University — a distributed ledger designed to automate the university's administration and provide personalized one-to-one teaching with respected academics from anywhere in the world.

San Jose State University's School of Information is also exploring the potential of using blockchain technology for library and information services. Some of the [ideas](#) being considered include:

- A replacement for the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) — a distributed, permission-less metadata archive;
- A more effective way of protecting digital-first sale rights;
- Verifying academic credentials and skills badging;
- A smart contract that facilitates the indexing and sharing of a library's community's collections (e.g. equipment, autos, books, and skills);
- Designing an InterPlanetary File System (IPFS) that enables a content-addressable, peer-to-peer method of storing and sharing hypermedia in a distributed file system.

Certainly all the blockchain benefits outlined above are good for everyone, including libraries, but the unique value comes with solving the problems that have been haunting the industry since the dawn of the internet — provenance, fraudulent research, academic paper pirating, and declines in media literacy by the proliferation of fake news.

A very hot topic these days is the [cost of middlemen](#) in research publishing and a perceived practice of double dipping. Imagine if researchers and schools were able to publish their papers and journals on a blockchain and give students open access without going through and paying a middleman?

There are already organizations (e.g. [Orvium](#) and [Project Aiur](#)) exploring the space. Orvium is building an immutable blockchain that fosters transparency and trust in the publishing process where journal owners can decide how payments and fees are distributed among authors, editors, reviewers, readers, and schools. Project Aiur focuses on creating a more transparent and tamper-proof AI peer review and publishing service.

### **A new internet is coming faster than you think**

Now, you've probably heard that bitcoin, ethereum, and all of the other public blockchains built on the same recipe are basically where the internet was in the early 90s. And that like the internet, it will be at least a decade before blockchain hits mainstream.

But I caution you to not get too comfortable assuming that you have lots of time before you have to think about blockchain. Remember, with computers doubling their capabilities every 12-18 months, in only 10 years, technology will be [1000 times more advanced](#) than it is today. The rate of growth of blockchain-based applications and related innovations is already showing exponential potential.

### **It's not the technology that matters; it's what you do with it**

The only successful path with new technology is through one of advancement. And what we need to move forward with AI and blockchain technology is an open imagination that focuses on building a better future for all, not just industry or ourselves.

So keep your mind open to all possibilities while you keep your fingers on the pulse of what's happening in these two promising innovations and where their power truly lies. Because it won't be that long before they become integral parts of business, education, society, and humanity. We can't afford to be left behind, again.

And as a closing piece of advice, think about what [Reed Hastings](#), CEO of Netflix, said when he took a leap of faith and separated his DVD business from streaming, "*Companies rarely die from moving too fast, and they frequently die from moving too slowly.*" ●





PRESSREADER FOR ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

# Trusted sources that separate fact from fiction.

In a world where fake news and misinformation are reaching epidemic proportions and declining media literacy a global concern, it's more important than ever for libraries to give students and faculty access to trusted media they can rely upon in their studies, work, and personal lives.

PressReader can help.

Let's talk!

# Journalism — the catalyst that connects communities and cultures in public libraries

I love libraries and have for as long as I can remember.

When I attended a US university as a foreign student in 1996, a friend of mine referred me for a job at the school library. I was thrilled because it fed two of my passions — a voracious appetite for news and information and a fascination with emerging technology. The library was a treasure trove of both.

I could access news from, and about, my home country that I never had the opportunity to read before. And I could use the computer lab and databases to make the extensive research I needed to do much, much easier. Suddenly I was no longer constricted by printed books, microfiche, and microfilm; almost everything I needed was either at my fingertips or easier to find. I was mesmerized by it all.

As a social science reference librarian assistant I spent a lot of time teaching other students how to use databases like ProQuest UMI in order to perform research more



effectively. I still remember the joy of seeing a student's eyes light up when they discovered that the paper they'd left to the last minute could be delivered on time.

But my delight at working there wasn't just about all the content and computers. I truly felt that I was part of a team of people who believed it was their civic duty/mission to help improve the lives of its members. I also learned a lot of invaluable skills that I use to this day in both my personal and business lives.

In 2003, while now attending grad school, my life took a new turn that today feels almost like Kismet. I was

hired as a co-op student to work on, among others, a news product for the library market — Library PressDisplay (renamed PressReader in 2013). Being a news junkie and a lover of libraries, it was a perfect match for me.

Today, in my position in the company, I'm no longer involved in the day-to-day operations of our library team, but I'm still proud that PressReader continues to advocate for two honorable and important institutions — libraries and journalism.

Together they can, and do, change the world.

*“I loved working with librarians. They are a special breed of people. They feel like it’s their civic duty, their mission in life to help others. And every time I’d go to a conference or trade show I’d see how passionate they were about seeking out new information, new tools, and products to help improve the lives of others.”*

### The role of public libraries in the community

In October 2017, [The Wall Street Journal](#) ran a story about public libraries. It was refreshing to read how many these brick and mortar institutions have transformed themselves from custodians of content to the caretakers of communities.

One example of going above and beyond the call of civic duty was in Hennepin County in the American state of Minnesota. In 2016 the county’s public library answered 1.3M questions from members — more than the entire county’s population of 1.2M. Pretty impressive!

There is no question that reference librarians are the lifeblood of a public library. In the words of marketing guru, [Seth Godin](#), they are “producers, concierges, connectors, teachers and impresarios.” It’s hard to argue with Seth when you discover all that they do. Along with lending out books and periodicals, reference librarians help people:

- Write resumes and apply for jobs
- Find social service, medical, and legal information and support
- Set up email accounts and provide tutorials on how to use them and other apps
- Teach classes in computer programming, website design, small business management, and even yoga
- Host events with experts who offer advice on a variety of subjects

- Create household budgets and discover new recipes
- Research historical information (e.g. weather, events, newspaper archives, and even family ancestries)
- Verify whether online news stories are true or fake
- Borrow everything from free museum passes, ties, briefcases, and jewelry (for job interviews) to WiFi hotspots for those who can’t afford WiFi at home

Some even lend out lamps that battle seasonal affective disorder and radon-testing kits for people’s homes. Whatever the needs of a community, public libraries are finding innovative ways to fill them.

### Public libraries and journalism — too important to lose

According to Wayne A. Wiegand, author of [Part of Our Lives: A People’s History of the American Public Library](#), many US information technologists in the early 1980s [forecasted the death of the public library](#) by the millennium.

A similar projection was made for newspapers in 2012 when futurist, [Ross Dawson](#), [predicted](#) that newspapers in their current form (i.e. print) would become extinct, starting in the US in 2017.

## Newspaper extinction timeline

Source: Future Exploration Network

When newspapers in their current form will become insignificant\*



- USA 2017 ●
- UK, Iceland 2019 ●
- Canada, Norway 2020 ●
- Finland, Singapore, Greenland 2021 ●
- Australia, Hong Kong 2022 ●
- Denmark 2023 ●
- New Zealand, Spain, Czech, Taiwan 2024 ●
- Poland, Sweden, Switzerland 2025 ●
- South Korea, Metro Russia, Belgium 2026 ●
- Netherlands, Ireland, Metro Brazil, Italy 2027 ●
- Austria, Slovakia, Greece, Portugal, U.A.E 2028 ●
- France, Israel, Malaysia, Croatia 2029 ●
- Germany, Estonia 2030 ●
- Japan, Metro China 2031 ●
- Hungary, Lithuania 2032 ●
- Latvia, Metro Mexico 2033 ●
- Serbia, Saudi Arabia 2034 ●
- Bulgaria, Chile, Uruguay 2035 ●
- Russia, Turkey 2036 ●
- Metro South Africa, Thailand 2037 ●
- Mongolia 2038 ●
- Argentina 2039 ●
- Rest of the world 2040+ ●

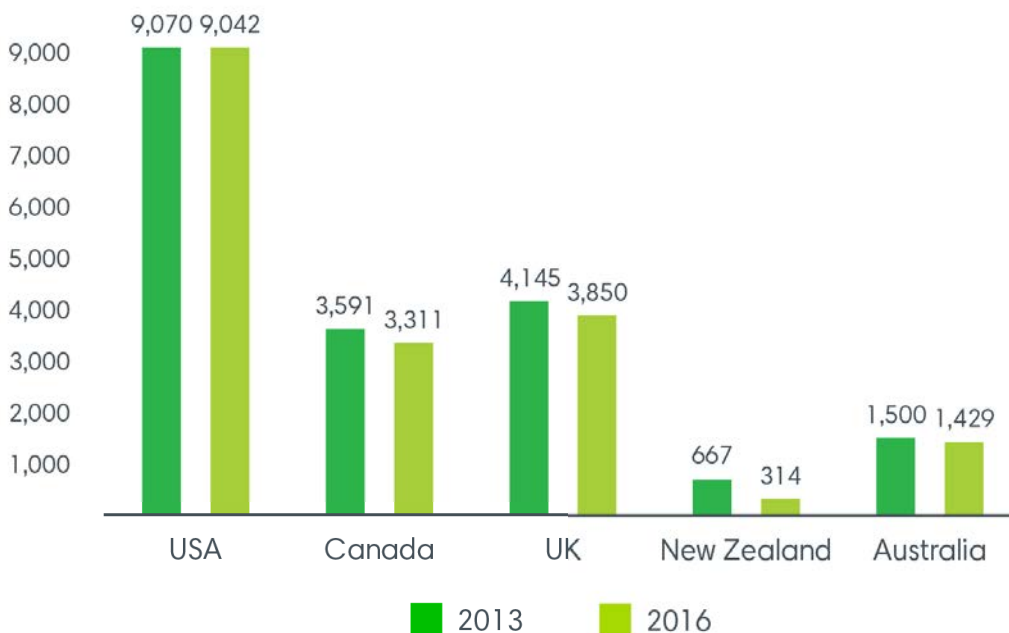
▨ - stripes indicate that newspapers will be extinct in metropolitan areas before regional areas

Thankfully both projections proved to be premature.

While there has been a slight decrease in the number of public libraries in some countries, there are still over 290,000 public libraries serving their communities worldwide.

## Number of public libraries (select countries)

Source: About the Global Library Statistics - OCLC 2016



In terms of newspapers, many printed editions are still alive, although they may not be kicking for long as more and more readers switch to digital.

## Global print circulation revenues decline as more users pay directly for digital content

Source: WAN-IFRA World Press Trends 2018

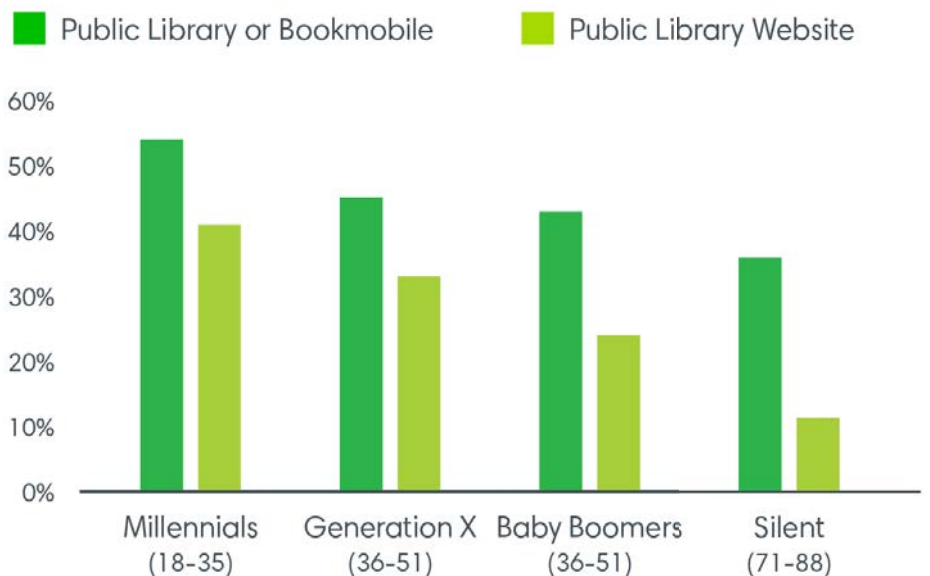


But the end of printed newspapers won't be the end of quality journalism, just like the transformation of printed library resources into digital assets won't be the death of public libraries. Quality journalism is the life force of mainstream media and it will survive without print in the webosphere. But what about libraries?

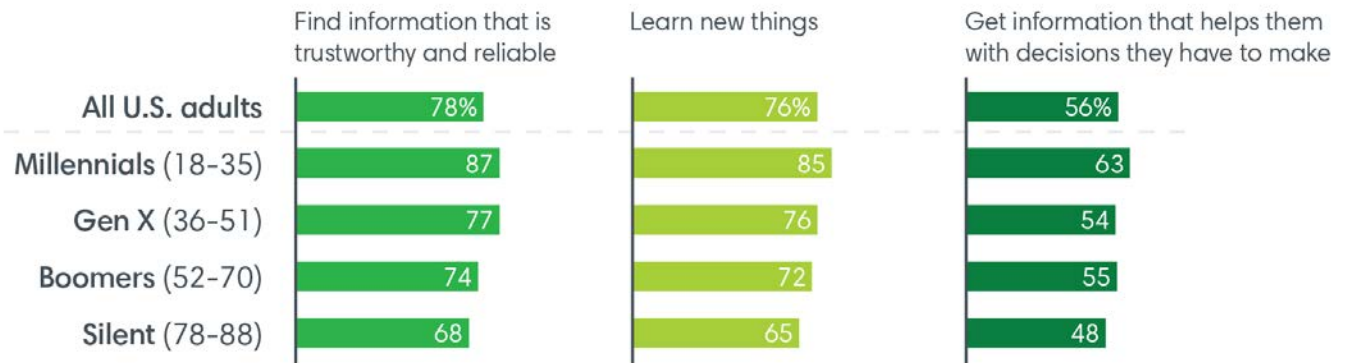
There are those who argue that Amazon should replace public libraries to save taxpayer money. I, for one, hope never to see that day. The value public library spaces and librarians bring to communities is far too great to lose.

## % of US Adults who visited a public library or associated website in the past 12 months

Source: Survey conducted Sept. 29 - Nov. 6, 2016. PEW RESEARCH CENTER



% of adults who say they think the public library helps them...



## The role of journalism in library communities

### Connecting people and ideas

The internet instigated fundamental changes in social behavior and turned people from passive consumers into active participants who want to control almost every aspect of their lives. It also [changed the role of journalism](#) from being a lecture delivered by a central authority in a one-to-many paradigm, to a conversation that connects communities in a many-to-many relationship.

When quality journalism is made available in public libraries and promoted by librarians, it fuels the power of the person and the collective by connecting people and ideas.

Although individuals may not see themselves as active community members within the physical library on a day-to-day basis, there're times when a high level of social interaction and connection within the community is essential.

For example, when Hurricane Irma threatened many parts of the Atlantic coast it spawned dozens of [fake news stories](#) on social media. Public libraries' quality media resources offered legitimate recommendations to guide patrons' actions and a sense of purpose that helped foster civic and emotional support among the members — a social bond among strangers was formed.

But not all community connections need to be initiated by disasters. Any event that impacts the community (e.g. elections, festivals, court cases, protests, real estate developments, etc.) can be used by librarians to prompt discussion and dialog among members in coffee klatch-type meetings and social gatherings in or outside of the library.

It's not rocket science to connect people and ideas within a library. Passionate librarians and unlimited access to trusted media sources is a great start.

### Enriching learning through discovery

Learning is a very personal process; we all learn in our own way. The one-size-fits-all approach of “I teach; you learn” no longer works.

By shifting from being collection-centric to people-centric, librarians can focus on the learning journey of individuals — helping them find what they need while facilitating the discovery of new sources that may be relevant to them. It’s not just about the content; it’s about the way patrons discover and engage with that content that matters most.

The music, video, eBook, and publishing industries have been doing this for years through platforms of aggregated content — providing all-you-can consume access to songs, TV series, movies, novels, newspapers, and magazines — on people’s personal devices.

What these platforms all have in common is their use of machine learning to curate content — a strategy that is preferred by the majority of people because they believe algorithms to be less biased or swayed by editorial and political agendas. People also like the fact that content is curated based on their individual consumption habits.

Algorithmic curation targets an audience of one — an important distinction in the era of “It’s all about me.” Because content that isn’t personal is likely not relevant. And if it’s not relevant, it’s not useful.

### Creating a vibrant global community at a local level

In our ever-shrinking world, public libraries find themselves under constant pressure to diversify their offerings for the global community living in their own backyards. Language is a big issue, given that there are over 6,000 of them in the world, but serving the needs of a heterogeneous constituency is much more than buying collections and resources in multiple languages.

Patrons want and need inclusiveness, especially in countries where civil society is becoming more divisive over political and social issues. And as conveners of open and thoughtful conversations among community members, public librarians can counter xenophobia and nationalism and bridge divides by:

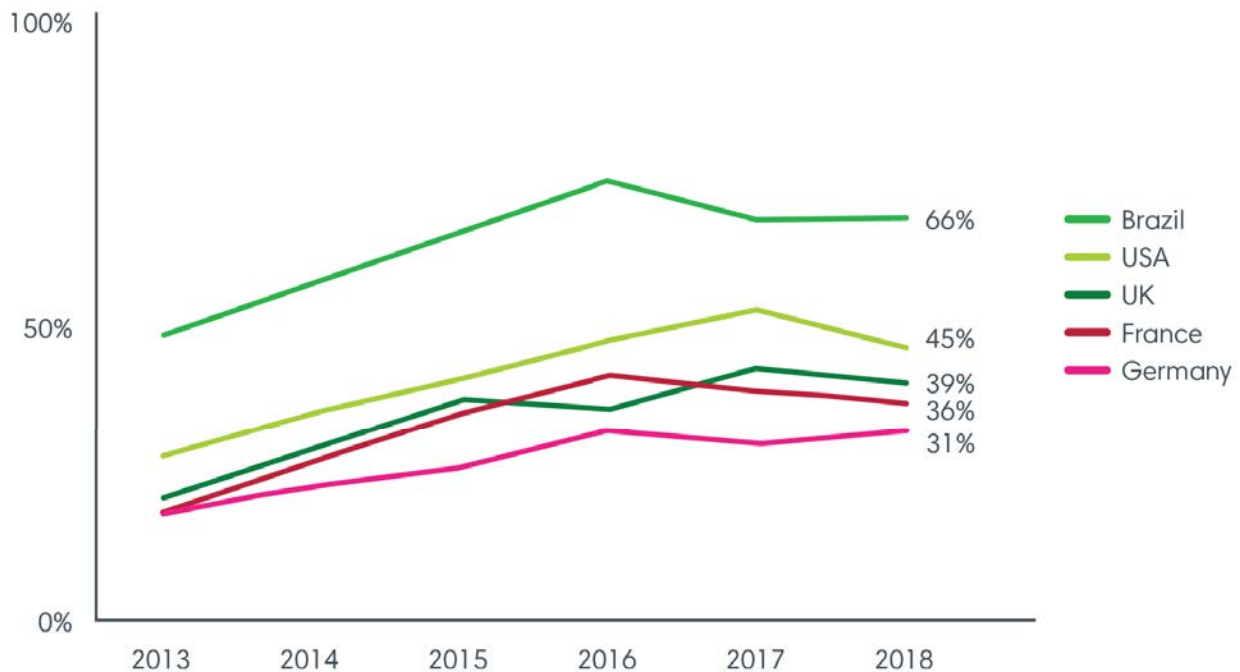
- Helping new residents improve their language skills by giving them free access to thousands of digital newspapers and magazines in multiple languages — publications they can read, listen to, share, comment on, and translate into multiple languages
- Open up the world’s news publications on library computers to those unable to pay for the technology or content — refugees, low-income residents, etc.
- Encouraging patrons to seek out multiple perspectives on globally significant issues and current affairs reported by local, national, and international journalists
- Hosting debates with the support of journalists and civic leaders around topics in the media that concern its members
- Conducting town halls (virtual and physical) to allow members to share opinions, compare experiences, and exchange knowledge and ideas

## The role of public libraries in a trust-deficient world

When social media took off a decade ago many people used it as a gateway for news, bypassing the library's limited supply of newspapers and magazines. But today, when it comes to news discovery, the love affair with social media is starting to largely wear off.

### Percentage of people that used social media as a source of news

Source: Reuters Digital News Report 2018



To avoid all the misinformation and fake news polluting their social channels, people are starting to seek out more credible news sources such as The Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, The Globe and Mail, The Guardian, Newsweek, Forbes, Le Figaro, and Vanity Fair, to name just a few.

But with the increasing number of paywalls popping up on newspaper and magazine sites, people are finding it difficult to access quality journalism without having to pay for it. This is where libraries can help. Today thousands of public, academic, and specialty libraries around the world are sponsoring access to trusted media on behalf of their patrons.

If you would like to find out how your public library can offer community members unlimited access to over 7,000 newspapers and magazines anywhere, anytime on their personal devices, [let's talk!](#) ●





## PressReader for Public Libraries



pressreader™

# Private online communities — can they work for libraries?

**R**ecently I wrote an article about how journalism can be a catalyst that helps connect local communities and cultures in public libraries. While writing it I started to think about online communities and their impact on individuals and society. I also thought about their potential for libraries. Can they be a catalyst that connects librarians with patrons and patrons with each other?

Some might argue that social media already does that. But I'm not so sure. Despite the freedom to post comments and content from both sides, social media does not connect strangers in meaningful ways. Members share the same platforms and interests, but they typically don't build strong relationships like we see in some other online forums. And herein lies, I think, an opportunity.

## It all started at The WELL

Most people think online communities came into existence with the birth of the public web in the early 1990s, but the fact is that people were "texting" each other long before that.

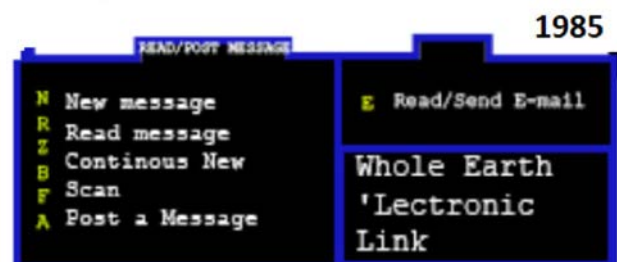
In February 1985, the Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link ([The WELL](#)) platform was created to encourage dialog between writers and readers of [Whole Earth Review](#) magazine. It was the brainchild of the magazine's

editor, Stewart Brand, and a physician, Larry Brilliant (who later became the Executive Director of the philanthropy arm of Google — Google.org).

The WELL's interface was organized as a collection of conferences around subjects designed to spark lively conversation. Hosted by a moderator/facilitator, it was an open platform that tended to attract an uninhibited intellectual gathering of people including journalists, futurists, freethinkers, and even Grateful Dead fans. With its behavior guideline of YOYOW (You Own Your Own Words), The WELL grew a loyal following which included some notable individuals such as Steve Case of AOL and Craigslist's Craig Newmark.

Let's not forget how embryonic the internet was at the time. Communication was only possible using basic text, on small screens, over very slow modem connections. And yet, members were willing to pay a monthly fee of US\$8 (equivalent to [US\\$18.77 today](#)), plus an hourly usage fee of US\$2 (US\$4.69 today). Impressive!

**T H E  
W@LL**



The WELL maxed out at about 10,000 members in its heyday and changed hands a few times since then. In 2012, The WELL Group (11 investors and community members) bought it for a reported US\$400,000.

Membership today is US\$15/month and a couple thousand people are still paying to participate. I decided to join with their discounted trial to check it out. After just a few clicks I found this post (redacted to protect privacy) about public libraries. It made me smile.

Under the *Ask the Experts* conference, I found a number of journalists sharing ideas and supporting each other in combating fake news -- the scourge of media literacy. Timely!

**Sweet, Uplifting, and Inspiring News Stories (6/1/2018+)**  
 Topic #3527, 375 responses, 0 new, Last post on Mon 29 Oct 2018 at 06:16 AM

[see all responses](#) | [scroll up 20 responses](#)  
 or jump to response

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**news 3527: Sweet, Uplifting, and Inspiring News Stories (6/1/2018+)**  
 #370 of 374: The vice of reason (redacted) Sun 28 Oct 2018 (02:16 PM)

Maximum fine at the Shrevesport library is \$3.00 which the library waived when the guy brought in his mother's book (Spoon River Anthology). He calculated that at .05 per day (the 1934 overdue rate) the uncapped total would have come to \$1,542.65

So that's the cheque he wrote as a donation to the Shreve Memorial Library.

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**news 3527: Sweet, Uplifting, and Inspiring News Stories (6/1/2018+)**  
 #371 of 374: (redacted) Sun 28 Oct 2018 (05:19 PM)

Sweet, Uplifting, and Inspiring?  
 I think so.

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**news 3527: Sweet, Uplifting, and Inspiring News Stories (6/1/2018+)**  
 #372 of 374: (redacted) Sun 28 Oct 2018 (06:18 PM)

Yes, very nice!

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**news 3527: Sweet, Uplifting, and Inspiring News Stories (6/1/2018+)**  
 #373 of 374: which is what we do: see voices (redacted) Mon 29 Oct 2018 (04:56 AM)

Nice!

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**news 3527: Sweet, Uplifting, and Inspiring News Stories (6/1/2018+)**  
 #374 of 374: (redacted) Mon 29 Oct 2018 (06:16 AM)

Wow!

I can't say I was comfortable with the primitive user experience, but I did enjoy the freedom of expression The WELL encouraged, and the camaraderie between members who seemed to know each other quite well. There were no [trolls](#) or personal attacks — just honest, passionate, and sometimes profane commentary on a hot topic/issue.

I started thinking about the transition libraries are making these days from just resource centers to community centers for their patrons and wondered if they should also include exclusive access to an online community as part of their membership package.

## Online communities are everywhere

Although most of us can probably name less than a dozen online communities off the tops of our heads (social media excluded), there are thousands, if not millions, of them all over the world. From small business forums like [Start-Up Nation](#) to [Lady Gaga's Little Monsters](#), there is a virtual community for every interest, passion, and shared purpose.

Why? Because people like to connect with like-minded people; their need to belong is an [intrinsic motivator](#) of human behavior.

Today many libraries look to social media for digital dialogue with patrons — most of which is sadly one-way. Lots of people comment

**Ask the media experts**  
 Topic #506, 127 responses, 0 new, Last post on Thu 27 Sep 2018 at 03:09 PM  
[This topic is linked](#)

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**experts 506: Ask the media experts**  
 #122 of 126: [REDACTED] Thu 27 Sep 2018 (01:29 PM)

A friend in Sweden is working on a thesis about how journalists / the media are combatting fake news. I found a couple of relevant stories by googling but I wonder if anyone knows of particular programs, e.g. in 3 schools, designed to discredit fake news / disinformation.

**experts 506: Ask the media experts**  
 #123 of 126: "Nay! Thou canst nat say, fro whannus: yt lakketh gramer!" [REDACTED] Thu 27 Sep 2018 (01:52 PM)

Discrediting fake news is kind of meta to be taught in journalism schools; it's research about the news, not actual reporting of news? We're teaching them how to report accurately, not necessarily how to uncover people who AREN'T reporting accurately.

I don't know of any programs that teach it as a separate class. We touch on it in my freshman survey class, Mass Media of Communication, and a similar class is taught at the freshman/sophomore level at a lot of four-year schools.

There are some journalism-related foundations that are developing tools to assess the reliability of news: The Trust Project, Center for News Literacy, News Literacy Project, [FactCheck.org](#), Politifact. They're not really about educating journalists, though.

The people who are really going balls-out on teaching students how to evaluate the quality of information are the librarians. She should check American Library Association, Wiki Education Foundation, UC Berkeley library, Indiana University library...

**experts 506: Ask the media experts**  
 #124 of 126: [REDACTED] Thu 27 Sep 2018 (01:53 PM)

Might also be worth checking with the National Education Association and other teachers' groups; a lot of schools have added this to their social studies curriculum lately.

**experts 506: Ask the media experts**  
 #125 of 126: [REDACTED] Thu 27 Sep 2018 (02:15 PM)

Oh this is really helpful. Thank you! The projects and foundations you mention sound like just what she's looking for. Actually, her PhD is in Library Science.

**experts 506: Ask the media experts**  
 #126 of 126: "Nay! Thou canst nat say, fro whannus: yt lakketh gramer!" [REDACTED] Thu 27 Sep 2018 (03:09 PM)

Told you they were the vanguard!

on posts, but few libraries engage with them when they do. But is social media the best place to create a vibrant library community — a place that feels like home where library staff, patrons, students, media, academics, writers, and editors can really get to know each other, learn from each other, and trust each other?

I decided to take a look at two of the more popular digital communities (Facebook Groups and Reddit) to see what they offer and whether it's where libraries and their communities should invest the time to truly connect.

## Facebook Groups

There's no doubt that some Facebook Groups are seeing strong engagement. One example is a recent [group](#) that was created so people could participate in an ABC investigation to solve a real-life mystery — the disappearance of Tegan Lane in 1996 in Australia.

Daily updates on the investigation were shared with members and tasks assigned so that people could help the ABC team crack the case. Uniting around a common cause, the Facebook Group grew to over 30,000 members in less than three weeks.

But are Facebook Groups, in general, worth the time and effort it takes to build, moderate, and support them? The challenge of a group being discovered among the [200 million](#) that already exist is enough to question its viability.

But a number of groups dedicated to [public librarianship](#) are giving it a try anyway. However, these groups are for librarians who want to connect with other librarians. I've yet to find a group (not page) that encourages dialogue between libraries and patrons. If you know of any, I'd love to hear about them.

## Reddit

*"If Facebook is people you know sharing things you don't care about, Reddit is things you care about shared by people you don't know."*

Tim Squirrell, PhD researcher - Quartz contributor

The self-proclaimed "front page of the internet" is a highly popular daily destination for millions of users, and despite its history of [controversies](#), it continues to grow in usage.



In the spring of 2018, Reddit surpassed Facebook to become the 3rd most popular destination in the US for a time. The news site is back down to 5th place, but its popularity isn't waning. With 330 million members, it has a user base larger than Twitter — a devoted audience that spends, on average, 16 minutes a day (compared to 10 on Facebook and six on Twitter) helping to generate over 150 million monthly page views in their favorite niche communities (called subreddits).

Unlike Facebook which stays light years away from its users (Have you ever tried to contact a real person at Facebook when your account's been hacked? Good luck with that!) Reddit gets up close and personal with its members, with Reddit staff regularly posting on the site.

Even the CEO hosts a quarterly "Ask Me Anything" (AMA) Q&A on the site. AMA is also popular with many reporters and journalists, along with notable celebrities and public figures like President Obama in 2012 — the most viewed AMA of all time and Bill Gates who has held six AMAs so far, the last being in February 2018.

Reddit also allows members to curate their Reddit experience in terms of what posts they see in their home page and includes other personalization features that go beyond what Facebook or Twitter offer.

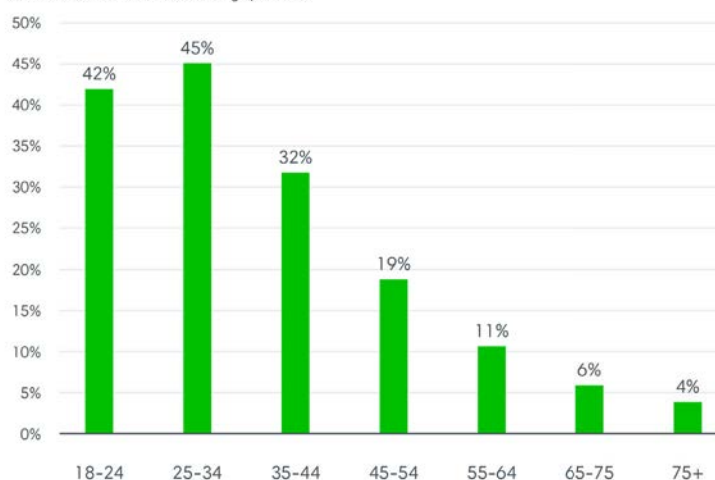
## Total global visitor traffic to Reddit.com 2018 (in billions)

Source: Statista, Similarweb.com



## % of US internet users who use Reddit by age

Source: We are Flint: Social Media Demographics 2018



## For the community by the community

Reddit isn't so much about discovering and sharing of content through links; it's more about culture, the community, and the interactions between members. You rarely see on other social media sites the level of intelligent debates redditors have, the quality of user-generated content, or the compassion and empathy between strangers looking to help each other. Sounds like a public library community to me!

Sure, unsavory types continue to try and infiltrate the site, but the community and Reddit management regularly deal with them through downvotes, subreddit shutdowns, or bans — efforts that studies have shown to be working.

Valued at US\$1.8B Reddit only pulls in a relatively moderate revenue stream through advertising, but those ads are designed to not detract from the user experience. You won't see any auto-play videos or flashy banners on the site. It's no surprise that Reddit earned the right to be automatically whitelisted by the Adblock extension on Google Chrome.

73% of Reddit users regularly get their news on the site, but it's not known for high website

referrals. People that treat Reddit as just another place to post links to articles or websites will soon find themselves shunned by members or, worse, banned from subreddits. Redditors abhor spam, which is why a number of subreddits don't even allow links in posts.

But for those libraries and patrons who are serious about participating in real conversations, it has potential.

### Invite readers into your living room

If there is one thing I learned while digging into online communities, it's that libraries who are serious about engaging with their patrons should, at a minimum...

1. *STOP the practice of posting content on social media and ignoring the people who comment on it.*
2. *START interacting with friends and followers who comment on your posts. Ask more questions and engage in a dialogue just as you would in the library if someone made a comment or asked a question.*

For more progressive libraries that want to take community engagement to the next level, think about building your own online community where librarians can dig deeper into issues with members who are digitally engaged. Here are some tips to get that going.

- Find the right technology for your community. There are a number of [community platforms](#) from which to choose.
- Create an environment where people feel welcome and safe, where they can

meet and chat with others who share the same values/purpose, where they can be heard and appreciated, and where they can make a difference — whether it's contributing to the content, fact-checking it, debating it, or sharing it.

- Put members at the top of the agenda, not you or your library, and focus on creating an engaging user experience that they can personalize.
- Be an integral part of the online community, not as a self-promoter of the library or its content, but of the members and their contributions.
- Don't be shy about borrowing great ideas like Reddit's AMA Q&A events and inviting local politicians and other public figures to participate.
- Be so valuable and remarkable that members will want to invite others to join the community.

The WELL launched a new way for people to connect back in 1985. And as much as we've come a long way since then, the fundamentals of building a successful online community haven't changed. It's all about putting people at the top of your community agenda and making their experience one worth bragging about to their family and friends.

I'd love to hear your thoughts on whether libraries should invest in their own online communities, so please feel free to [reach out to me anytime](#). ●



# Mass Media and its impact on Information Literacy

In June 2018, the commission on [Fake News and the Teaching of Critical Literacy Skills in School](#) reported that only 2% of young people in the UK “have the critical literacy skills they need to tell if a news story is real or fake.”

The study also learned that 50% of UK teachers felt that “the national curriculum does not equip children with the literacy skills they need to identify fake news.” A third believed, “the critical literacy skills taught in schools are not transferable to the real world.”

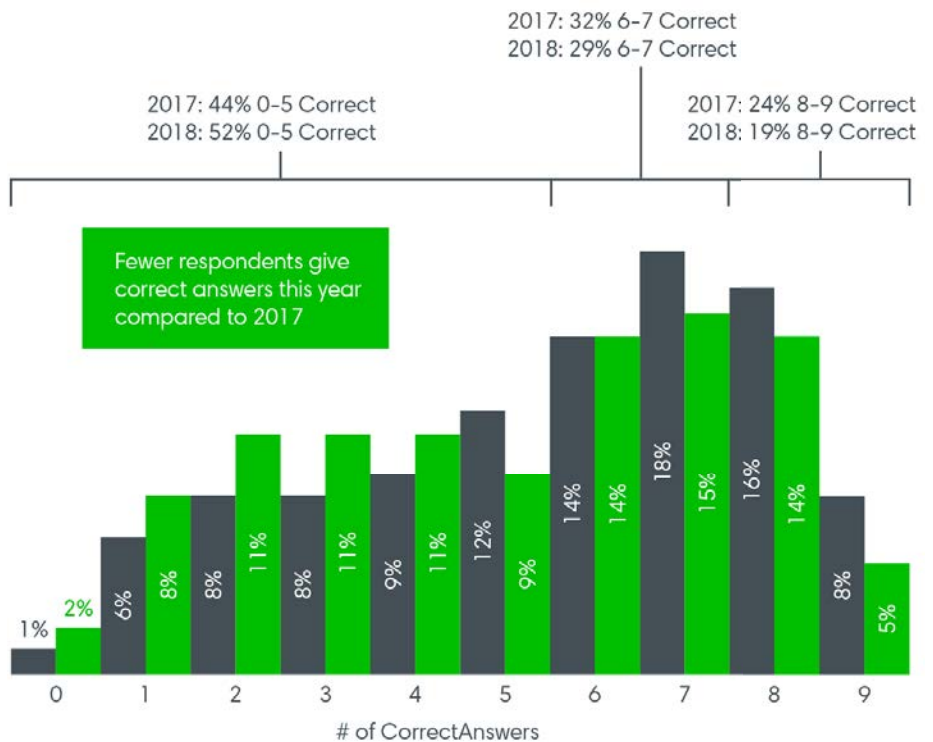
And the UK isn’t alone.

In November 2016, the Stanford Graduate School of Education reported that the majority of US students struggle with information literacy, and are unable to distinguish between credible and unreliable news articles.

Last year, the [State of Critical Thinking](#) study from MindEdge found that although young college students and recent graduates were confident in their critical thinking skills, in actual fact their ability to detect fake news online is declining.

## Proportion of total Respondents with the Following Number of Correct Answers

Source: MindEdge’s Second Annual State of Critical Thinking Survey 2018





Information literacy, or the lack thereof, is a [global](#) concern.

### What is information literacy and why is it important?

According to the Association of College and Research Libraries, information literacy is:

*"the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning."*

Information literacy empowers people to learn for themselves so that they can make more informed decisions. It helps them recognize biases, understand context, and evaluate information so they can effectively use and communicate it. It's a lifelong skillset that meaningfully impacts every person's education, career, civic engagement, and personal life.

### We're drowning in a firehose data

According to IDC, there was over [20 ZB of data](#) on the internet (~22 trillion GB) in 2018. That equates to more than 60 billion GB of content being created **every single day!** Even more astounding: 90% of all that online data was created in just the last two years.

IDC predicts that by 2025 the global data sphere will be 175 ZB.

What does this mean? Well, now almost four billion people are drowning in information, but still starving for quality, trusted content.

### Today's news never sleeps

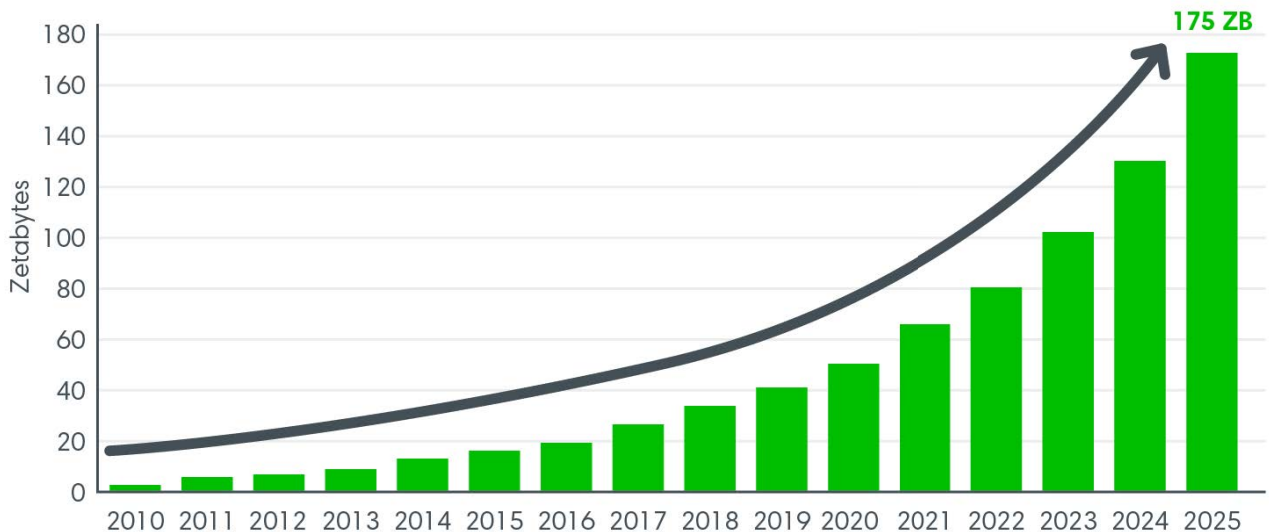
The pervasive [24-hour content cycle](#) may seem like a dream come true for news junkies, but for most people it's a nightmare. Driven by the desire for more eyeballs and speed, publishers' continual recycling of stories with only minor updates is actually hurting us — distorting our perceptions of reality with over-sensationalized 'breaking news' that isn't really news at all.

*"The nasty little truth about 24-hour news — whether cable TV or the Internet — is that most of it is not news. Looks like news. Sounds like news. Smells like news. But nope, it isn't news."*

*Howard Rosenberg, Charles S. Feldman, Co-authors  
[No Time to Think: The Menace of Media Speed and the 24-hour News Cycle](#)*

## Annual Size of the Global Datasphere

Source: Data Age 2025, sponsored by Seagate with data from IDC Global DataSphere, Nov2018



## Who can we trust?

There's never enough time for people to analyze any of it — meaning no time for proper critiquing or fact-checking. Media websites that are constantly being updated have become nothing more than a snacking tool, and a dangerous one at that.

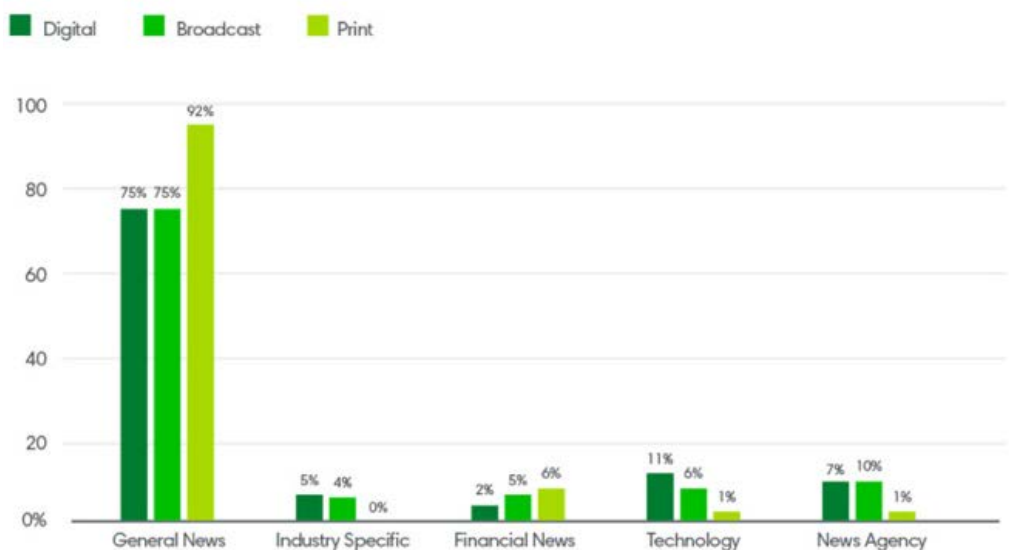
In a recent [Project Information Literacy \(PIL\) News Study Report](#), 68% of students surveyed said the amount of news available to them was overwhelming, with 51% saying it was difficult to recognize the most important news stories on any given day. And the intrusive nature of the news that finds them (even when they're not looking for it) was frustrating for the majority.

Early in 2019, [Mike Caulfield](#), director of blended and networked learning at Washington State University Vancouver, and head of the Digital Polarization Initiative of the American Democracy Project, wrote a compelling article about the [scarcity of attention](#). He insists that in our so-called 'information age,' content is becoming less and less valuable as it becomes more and more commodified.

It's hard to argue with Caulfield when you look at the [WAN-IFRA 2017 Outlook](#) report, and see that the majority of media organizations are just regurgitating over-published general news content from wire services.

## How would you describe the content of your primary news product?

Source: *World News Publisher Outlook 2017 - Innovation Research Group, & WAN-IFRA*



*“News interrupts my life a lot, especially when I’m on Facebook and I’m looking at friends’ pictures and enjoying myself and then there’re videos about violence in Gaza and I think, “Oh God, I can’t avoid news!”*

Female student  
Life and Physical Sciences major,  
PIL study

As a result of this commodifying of content, a student’s primary skill becomes their ability to make quick decisions about where best to focus their eyes and ears in a world where dubious outlets are vying to capture their attention and influence their beliefs, decisions, and behaviors.

In our attention-scarce world, Caulfield argues that everything is suspect — an assertion supported by the PIL study. 72% of those surveyed said that “without knowing the source of the news — where a news item originated — they could not trust a news item.”

*“What I find with many students is they are **trust misers** — they don’t want to spend their trust anywhere, and they think many things are equally untrustworthy. And somehow they have been trained to think this makes them smarter than the average bear.”*

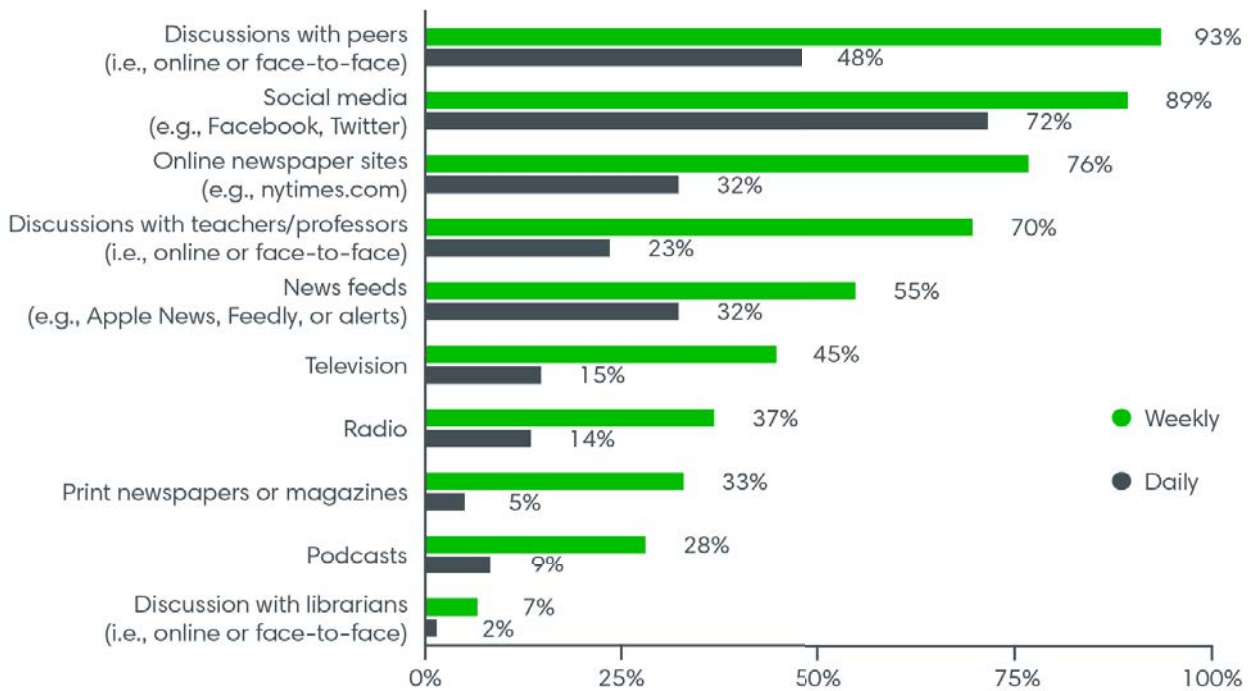
*Director of blended and networked learning  
Washington State University Vancouver*

So, who’s trained them? It doesn’t appear to be those in academia, given the lack of attention information literacy is getting in many school curriculums.

According to PIL, only two out of the 18 institutions in their study had a full-term information literacy course requirement for all students to graduate. When it comes to students’ pathways to legitimate news, librarians are sadly underutilized. Students don’t know what they’re missing.

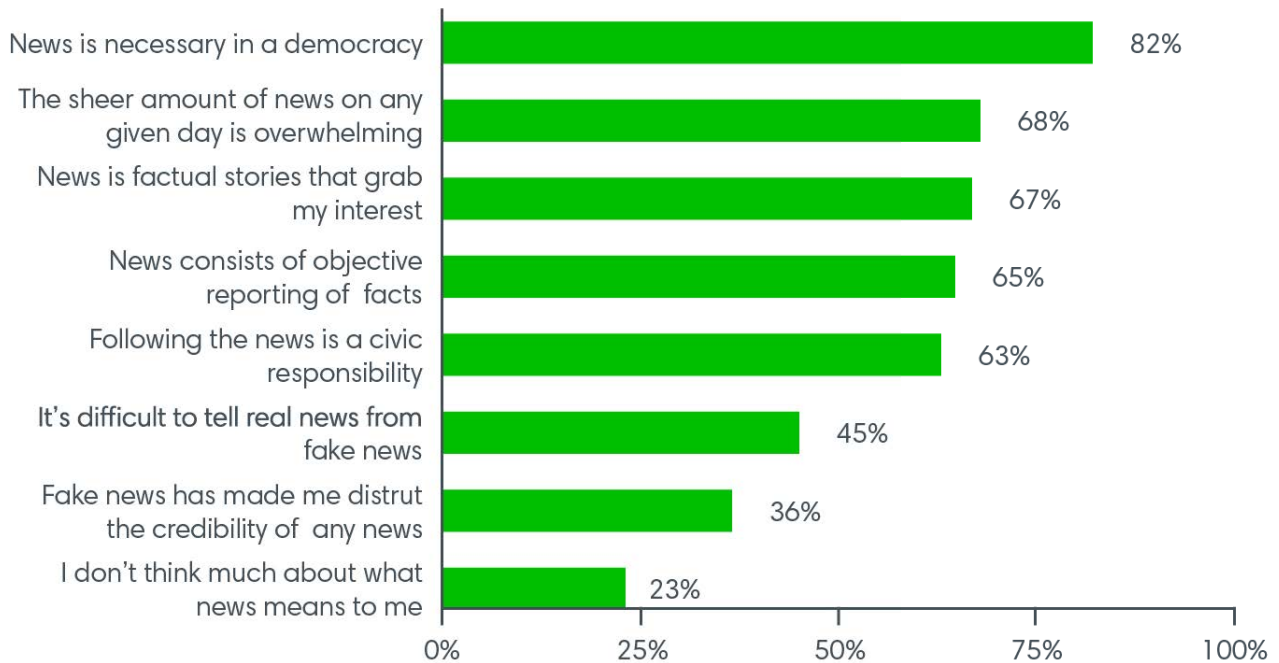
## Student’s pathways to news

Source: Project Information Literacy: The News Study Report Oct 2018



However, although students discover most of their news through friends and social media, and despite being overwhelmed by its sheer volume, they do recognize the importance of news in their lives.

## Students' definition of the role of news in their lives



They appreciate news' value; they just need help finding the fact-based, trusted content that will serve them best in their studies and their lives.

## Journalism today

Few would argue that since the advent of the internet, journalism's challenges have been daunting. On almost a daily basis we read about how news professionals all over the world face:

- [Demands to do more with less](#)
- [Increased competition from social media, bloggers, and digital-only media](#)
- [Pressures to be first rather than be factual](#)
- [Massive layoffs](#)

But despite all this, the core principles of journalism — accuracy, truth, impartiality, fairness, humanity, and accountability — still remain. And they resonate with people, including our youth.

74% of students in the PIL study said that they trusted professional journalists from traditional outlets more than social media sites that allowed anyone to post news. And

many students automatically conferred authority and assigned trust to well-known sources like The Washington Post and The New York Times.

The war against fake news and propaganda isn't over, but there are signs that trust is moving in the right direction. According to [Edelman's 2019 Trust Barometer](#), traditional news media engagement rose by 22% in the past year, with traditional publishers now the most-trusted sources, particularly in North America and Europe.

## Massive Rise in News Engagement

How often do you engage in the following activities related to news and information?

Source: 2019 Edelman Trust Barometer

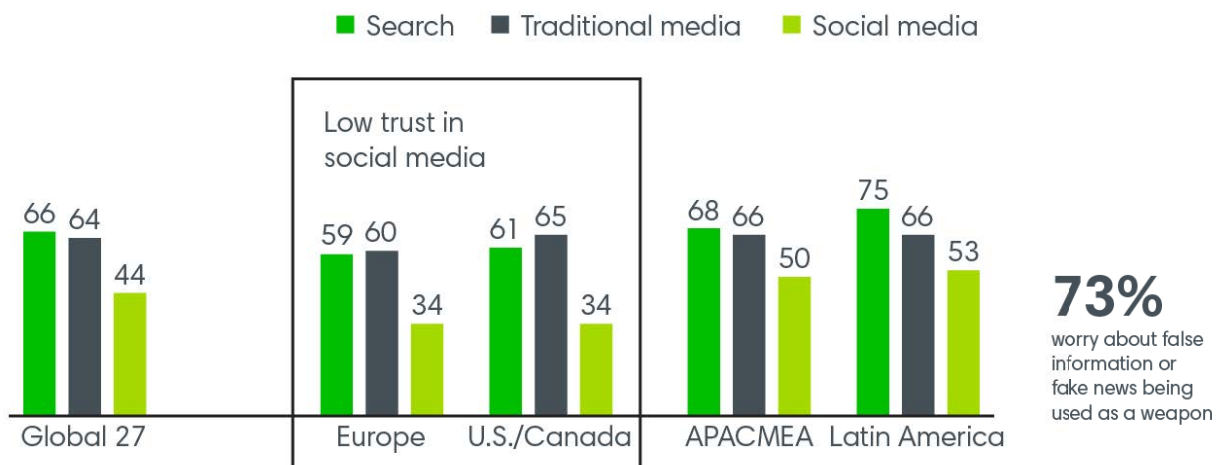


And as people seek out more reliable sources, traditional journalism bears a hallmark of trust.

## Looking for Reliable Sources

Percent who trust each source of news

Source: 2019 Edelman Trust Barometer



## The future of digital news access is uncertain

Back in 2015, the European Union put forth the Digital Single Market Strategy proposal which included a highly contested Directive on Copyright in the EU. The Directive includes a range of initiatives to “modernize copyright rules to fit for the digital age.”

Two of these directives are expected to have significant implications on digital news and students’ access to quality media.

Under [Article 15](#), news aggregators such as Google News will only be able to share “very short” snippets of text on their newsfeeds, compared to the larger snippets (as shown below) that we’re used to seeing — snippets students often use to determine whether a story is worthy of deeper scrutiny.

Publishers contend that displaying these larger snippets [infringes on their copyright](#), believing it gives them renewed powers to speak to the googles of the world and demand fair compensation.

News aggregators argue that they shouldn’t have to pay for the snippets, because they make publishers’ content more discoverable and drive traffic to their websites, at no cost.

It’s an ongoing battle that could result in Google, Yahoo news, and others significantly curtailing the amount of content made available to readers.

*“Google News might quit the continent in response to the directive. The internet company has various options, and a decision to pull out would be based on a close reading of the rules and taken reluctantly.”*

*Jennifer Bernal  
Public policy manager for Europe, the Middle East and Africa  
Google*

The screenshot shows the Google News interface with a search for "Brexit". The left sidebar contains navigation options: Top stories, For you, Favorites, Saved searches, U.S., World, Business, Technology, Entertainment, Sports, Science, and Health. The main content area displays four news snippets:

- Brexit: May arrives in Strasbourg for last-ditch talks with EU** (BBC News • 1 hour ago). Includes a sub-headline: "Brexit is an 'unmitigated disaster' that has damaged UK investment, former Barclays chair says" (CNBC • 6 hours ago). A "View full coverage" link is present. Image: Theresa May.
- News Daily: Ethiopian Airlines crash and Brexit talks deadlock** (BBC News • 10 hours ago). Image: Ethiopian Airlines plane.
- Brexit: No 10 confirms May flying to Strasbourg for talks with Juncker, but stresses deal not in bag - Politics live** (The Guardian • 3 hours ago). Image: Brick wall.
- Taking Their Time, French Customs Officers Offer Taste of Post-Brexit Mayhem** (The New York Times • 5 hours ago). Image: A truck with "SIRA" on it.

I hope this isn't the case and that both sides will come to an agreement on what a fair compensation model should look like.

[Article 17](#) requires platforms that support user-generated, or shared, content (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube) to “monitor and proactively screen content uploads for potential copyright infringement or face liability.”

Many [critics](#) claim that Article 17 will actually consolidate power among the major tech companies (not weaken it), restrict freedom of expression, and potentially lead to censorship that could harm smaller content producers.

Article 17 could also encourage platforms to cherry-pick content to save money — a practice that could result in even deeper echo chambers, more native advertising posing as editorial, and increased bias blindness thanks to reduced exposure to multiple perspectives on news.

The text for the legislation around these two Articles was [finalized in](#)

[February 2019](#), and once ratified, member states of the EU will have two years to implement it.

### Implications for students

If one accepts publishers' general assertion that someone needs to pay for content production — whether that be readers, news aggregators, or social platforms — then publishers need to reinvest digital revenue in creating higher quality content.

But if content discovery is curtailed by major tech platforms, how can publishers hope to create trust with readers? How can they demonstrate their value such that people decide they want to pay for a subscription? How can students, who often can't afford to pay much for content, determine whether a “very small snippet” of content is worth their time or attention?

There will still be some publishers who continue to offer free access to their content online, but the amount and quality of that content will be limited. This will leave people inundated by content with little value, and will essentially dumb

down the population who can't afford to pay for better quality news.

The European Union was the first to reform its copyright policies, but it likely won't be the last. And when these regulations take effect and spread throughout the world, what will average people do?

Earlier this year, [Reuters](#) predicted that reader revenue in the form of subscriptions will be the top priority for the majority of newspaper and magazine publishers in 2019 — a strategy that seems to conflict with other research reporting that the vast majority of people (including most students) are unwilling or unable to pay for digital news.

So under the EU's new legislation, how will students get news that matters to them and their studies, when the highest quality content will be locked behind paywalls?

The trend towards more paywalls and internet regulation looks like a losing proposition for students. But all is not lost.

## Quality aggregation is the future of news

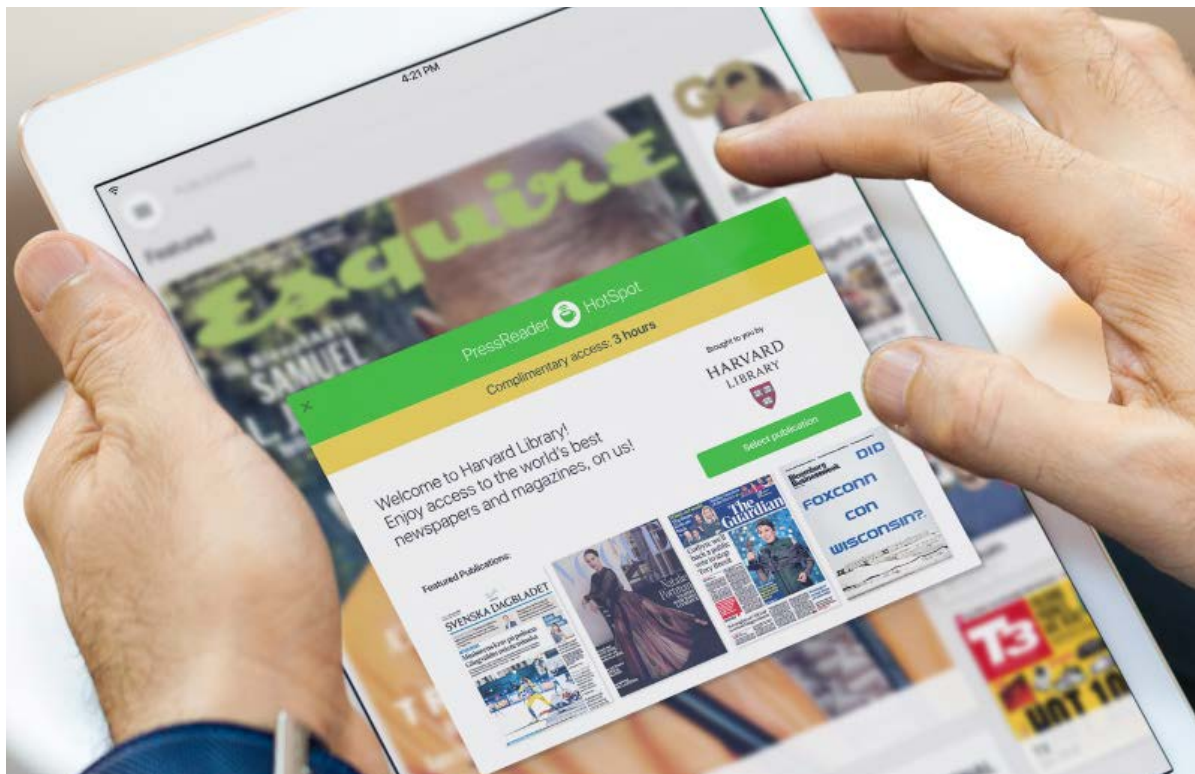
Content aggregation has always been a part of our lives. Before the internet, newspaper and magazine publishers aggregated stories and advertising into papers and periodicals. Music labels aggregated songs into albums, and cable companies aggregated video content for people's TVs. And of course, libraries have always aggregated all forms of content, for patrons to enjoy.

But then came the web, and with it the rise of platforms and newsfeeds that changed everything.

Paid content aggregators typically monetize news through subscriptions and sometimes advertising.

A small selection of these also support sponsored access models, which allow consumer-focused businesses (e.g. libraries, hotels, airlines, cruise ships, ferries and others) to pay up front and provide access to thousands of newspapers and magazines for their users.

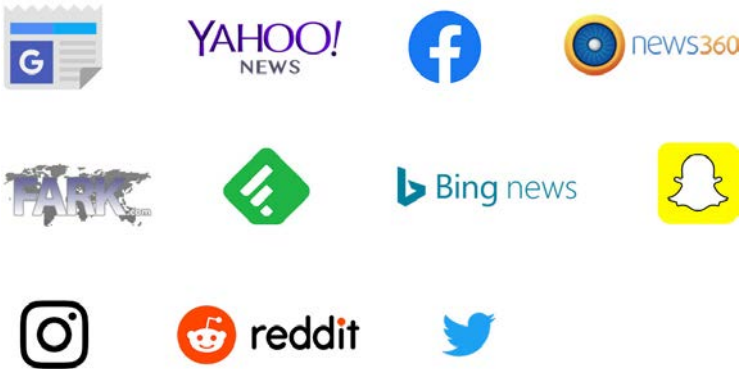
## Paid content aggregators





Free content aggregators make money off of advertising, of course, and sometimes user profile data that they collect and sell to others — often without users' explicit consent.

## Content aggregators monetized through advertising and user data



For users of these so-called 'free' platforms, the experience of reading the news can be frustrating. Most content is commodified, and that which isn't is hidden behind paywalls. Worse still, many publishers offer an underwhelming user experience. Truth be told, most newspaper and magazine publishers have never been able to replicate the immersive reading experience on their websites that they've had for centuries in print.

And while I've written more times than I can count about how publishers need to evolve with the times in their transition to digital, there are a lot of good reasons why the layout and user interface of newspapers and magazines hasn't changed all that much in 200+ years. It's also why digital replicas of publications have remained a valuable transition vehicle for accessing printed content online.

### Replica vs. website content: no contest

Digital replicas of newspapers and magazines retain the interest of readers longer than website content, for many reasons:

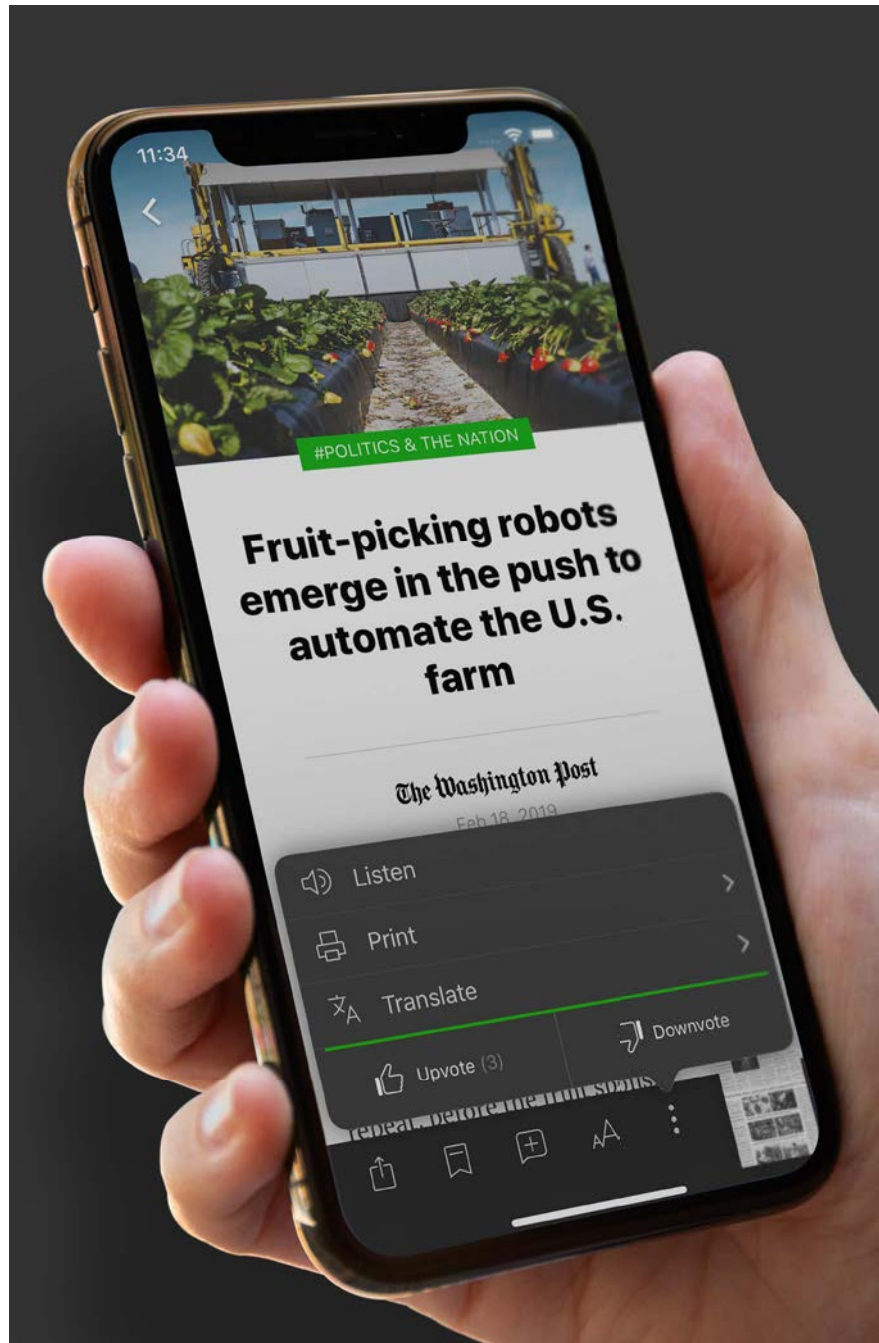
1. A newspaper or magazine replica has a beginning and an end — a welcome reprieve from the glut of information we face daily online. When you finish reading an issue, you receive emotional and psychological benefits from the fact that you've completed something. You get a sense of closure — a sense of accomplishment.
2. A replica of the print edition provides a more immersive reading experience, with the added benefit that it can be downloaded and read offline. Try that with a website.
3. The traditional layout is familiar and consistent, not just within a single publication, but across almost all titles of a similar type. By contrast, there's little or no consistency in media website design. They all differ in layout and style. Perhaps the only thing they share in common is an overabundance of friction points (e.g. paywalls, slow load times on mobile, popups, auto-play video, and other forms of distracting advertising).
4. A replica's user interface (typeface, headline size and style, article length, grammar, text spacing, white space, color usage, image size, and placement) is designed to provide visual cues to help people navigate the issue and discover relevant content. Readers get an immediate sense of which stories are most important.
5. Readers enjoy a higher degree of serendipity when reading a replica than when browsing a website. While

reading an article in replica mode, our peripheral vision detects adjacent content, facilitating discovery of interesting information.

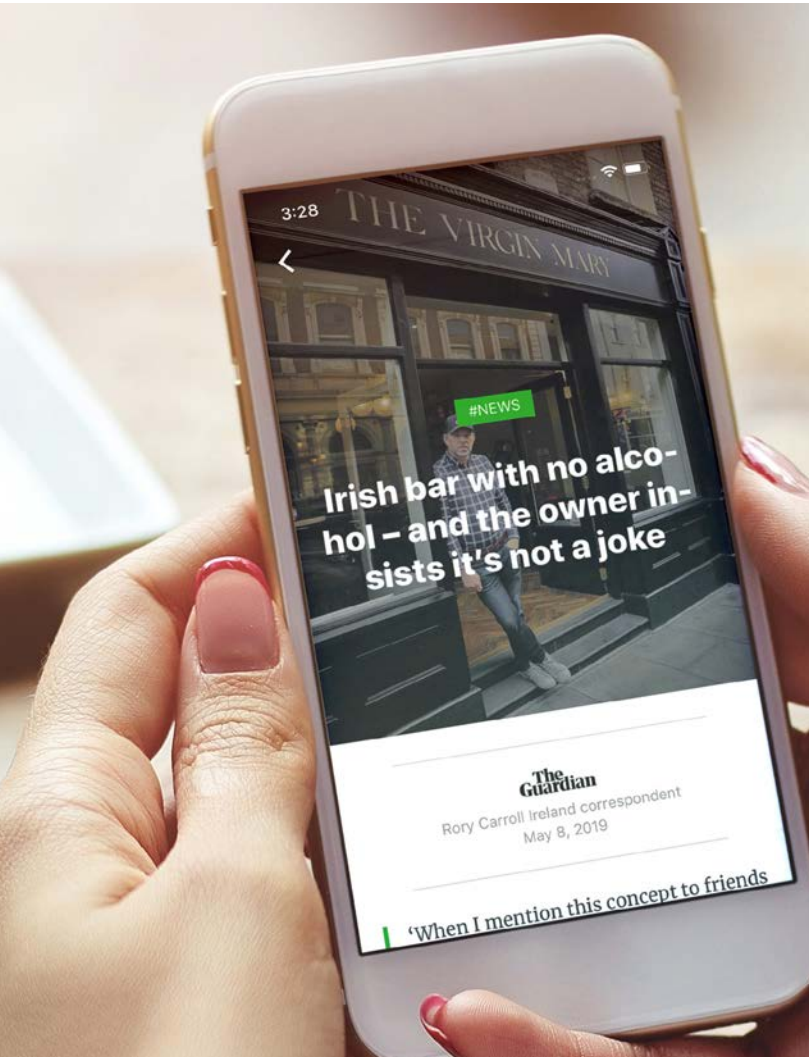
6. But on websites, every article typically lives on its own page, isolated from all other stories. Once a person is finished reading an article, they're often left with no alternative but to click back in their browser to look for something else to read — another unwelcome point of friction.
7. Reading traditional media in replica form exercises both our linear (reading left to right or right to left, from start to finish) and non-linear (discontinuous) reading. Websites typically ignore linear reading preferences and instead facilitate non-linear reading through the overuse of hyperlinks, images, and video that encourage jumping from one piece of content or page to the next without ever finishing what was started. There's a reason for that: it provides more opportunities to show you ads.
8. Replicas are about breadth and depth of content, and contain "all the news that's fit to print," according to The New York Times' slogan. Websites are more about volume, because volume means more pages, which means more opportunities for advertising revenue. But even amongst all those pages, you'd be hard pressed to find all of the content from the printed edition. Believe me, I've tried and come up woefully short.
9. In the academic world of source-citing, replicas can be easily referenced because the content doesn't change, unlike web content, where one article can evolve over time.

But digital replicas aren't for everyone.

Traditional (often more mature) news consumers prefer to read digital replicas of publications thanks to their familiarity with the print product. But they, like their younger counterparts, also want enhanced features to make the reading experience more interactive. These can include things like instant translation, commenting, voice narration, sharing functionality, etc.



Digital natives often want more of a streaming experience that allows them to scroll through newspaper and magazine articles effortlessly on their mobile screens.



To serve these diverse audiences, aggregated news platforms must facilitate distribution and discovery of content in different formats. They must deliver the right content to the right person at the right time.

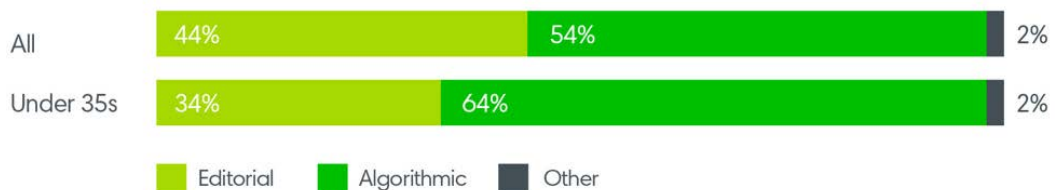
### In content aggregation, curation is crucial

All content platforms, including news aggregators, use some form of machine learning to curate content for users — a strategy that is preferred by the majority of people, particularly the younger or tech-savvy ones.

News consumers have also learned from other aggregators that you should never have to go searching for another piece of content. Take Spotify, for instance. Once a playlist, album, or song ends, Spotify will automatically play music which it 'thinks' you'll like. And very often, its algorithm is right.

## Preference for editorial or algorithmic news selection? - All markets

Source: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism: Brand and trust in a fragmented news environment



People value the ‘independence of algorithms’ because they consider them to be less biased or swayed by editorial and political agendas. They also believe that algorithms help introduce them to a broader range of content and brands based on their interests and preferences, which are more topic-driven than bias-guided.

*“It gets a variety of things — like I’m interested in certain topics that I probably wouldn’t find, or I’d have to search for it myself. So, it’s like a one-stop shop of things that interest me.”*

*Focus group participant  
‘Brand and trust in a fragmented news environment’ study*

But as trusted as algorithmic curation is by many readers, it’s only as accurate as the data that drives it. If the data is inherently misinterpreted, incomplete, or manipulated (remember Facebook’s Trending Topics embarrassment?) the results can be anything from comical to catastrophic.

We’ve seen this far too often in the era of fake news, echo chambers, and duped readers who help spread misinformation and propaganda.

And then there’s bias. Whatever its form (political, economic, environmental, etc.), bias will always be a thing in the media world, even when you’re talking about the most trusted sources.

Sometimes the publisher is serving the interests of its owners by dictating what goes into an issue

and what does not — something I’ve written about at length in The Insider magazine. Other times, it serves the interests of advertisers, who want to stage branded content as editorial.

And then there are publishers who are desperate to stand out in an ocean of content. By publishing deliberately biased content with clickbait headlines, they hope to attract more eyeballs and the ad dollars they trust will follow.

We can’t escape bias; it’s part of the human condition. This is why it’s important that readers not only enjoy a personalized reading experience based on their interests (e.g. topics, sources, columnists, etc.), but that they’re also exposed to multiple perspectives in the content they read, not just at the local or national levels, but at the global level too.

*“While good journalism aims for objectivity, media bias is often unavoidable. When you can’t get the direct story, read coverage in multiple outlets which employ different reporters and interview different experts. Tuning in to various sources and noting the differences lets you put the pieces together for a more complete picture.”*

*Kevin Arms  
Librarian and archivist  
Lake-Sumter State College  
TEDx speaker on information literacy*



Some aggregated news sites are algorithmically designed to share diverse global perspectives. Many platforms and publisher websites are not.

### Librarians as pioneers and champions

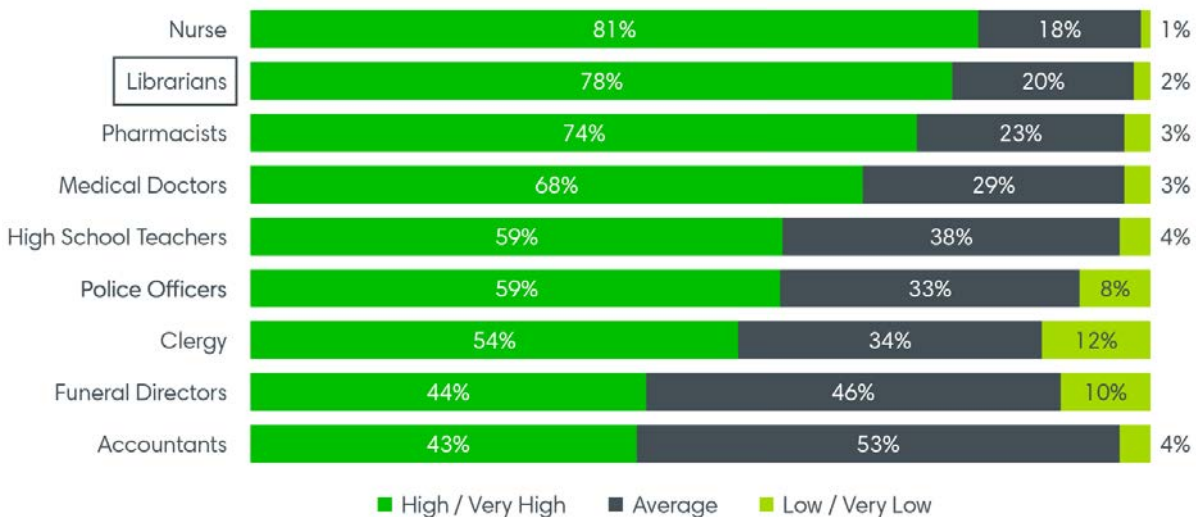
The role of libraries and librarians in supporting our communities, enriching our schools, and sustaining our democracy cannot be overstated.

Their advocacy for equal access to content made them pioneers of the sharing economy when information was both scarce and highly valued.

So, it's no surprise that libraries rank highly among our most trusted institutions, with librarians being considered one of the most trustworthy professions.

### Trustworthiness of Professions - Highest Ratings

Source: Maine State Library Trusted Professionals Survey 2016



### Libraries as champions for local media

In almost every category of business, consolidation is inevitable, and the news industry is no exception. But instead of implementing [smart consolidation](#) to preserve the best journalism, what we've been seeing, especially in local media, is [consolidation turned ugly](#). It's happening almost on a monthly basis in North America and Europe. The common denominator throughout these consolidations has been an absent owner

looking to capitalize on the struggles of the business.

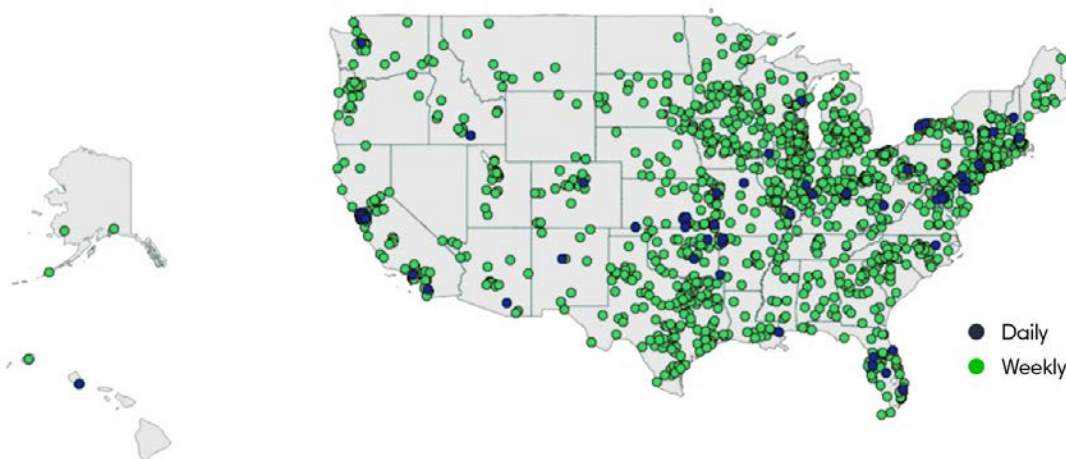
By borrowing against the company's assets, selling off unwanted properties, cutting newsroom staff, axing pension funds, and slashing other operational expenses, profit-driven proprietors are able to siphon off massive amounts of user data along with substantial profits from dividends, incentives, management fees, and tax breaks. Once the business has been exploited to the max, the owners who've made all their money back, either bankrupt it or sell it off.

In the US alone, close to 20% (~1,800) of metro and community newspapers have either merged or gone out of business since 2004. And it's [far from over](#).

## Where have newspapers disappeared?

Source: UNC School of Media and Journalism's Center for Innovation and Sustainability in Local Media

Since 2004, the U.S. has lost more than 1,800 newspapers — 62 dailies and 1,749 weeklies.



So, who's stepping up to serve their communities and champion local journalism? You guessed it: librarians across the US and Canada are working hard (and often on their own time) to try and fill the void. But it's a daunting task.

### Librarians' and educators' roles in information literacy

*"Students are hungry, we believe, for good models of engagement with news. They want to talk about news, both their frustrations and their longings for what they need from news providers. Accordingly, educators need to be more explicit about what a good "information diet" looks like, the drawbacks of being "always on," and, most of all, what habits a discerning news consumer practices."*

*Project information literacy: How students engage with news*

To help empower today's youth in its quest for information literacy, the PIL study offered up six recommendations for educators, librarians, journalists and social media platforms. Here's a summary of those directed at specifically at librarians and educators:

- Integrate news discussions into the classroom;
- Help students learn more deliberately about the relevance of news;
- Consider a 'writing across the curriculum' program to help broaden student engagement with news, and encourage them to build connections between their news practices and their academic work;
- Help students understand the most effective way to vet and sort information.

Here are a few more I thought of:

- Make news literacy a mandatory subject in school, and offer it in public libraries as well.

A [survey of college students](#) in 2017 found that "students who had taken a news literacy course had significantly higher levels of news media literacy, greater knowledge of current events, and higher motivation to consume news, compared with students who had not taken the course. The effect of taking the course did not diminish over time."

- Help students learn where to spend their trust. Help them understand the risks of relying on social media and search engines for news sources.
- Open up the world of quality media to them, so they're exposed to trusted news and information from around the world.

In the past, libraries offering printed media with a few select

digital editions of periodicals and newspapers was sufficient to support the student body and teachers. At that time, [Newspapers in Education](#) programs adequately met a limited need for local and national news content. But today's expectations far exceed these antiquated single-source solutions. The world of knowledge is at students' fingertips, and they expect unlimited access to all it has to offer.

## Moving Forward

We all have a responsibility to be advocates for the truth, and suppressors of lies, hoaxes, 'alternative facts,' misinformation, and propaganda.

In 2019, let's make a commitment to seek out and support quality journalism, and shun that which is not.

Let's help those who struggle with information literacy by teaching them how to differentiate fact from fiction.

Because as Professor Brendan Nyhan from Dartmouth College once said, "Standing up for facts is a kind of patriotic act, and a necessary one." ●

*"I feel like with the world being so big, it's just like we need a big platform to unite them all... We need a platform that anybody can hear about news."*

**Male | 17  
African-American**

*Source: How Youth Navigate the News Landscape | Knight Foundation*

# Public libraries and their role in sustaining democracy

*“There is not such a cradle of democracy upon the earth as the Free Public Library. A library outranks any other one thing a community can do to benefit its people. It is a never failing spring in the desert.”*

**Andrew Carnegie** - 19th century industrialist and philanthropist

**A**ccording to the Economist Intelligence Unit’s latest edition of the [Democracy Index](#), democracy is being threatened, with 2017 reporting “the worst decline in global democracy in years.”

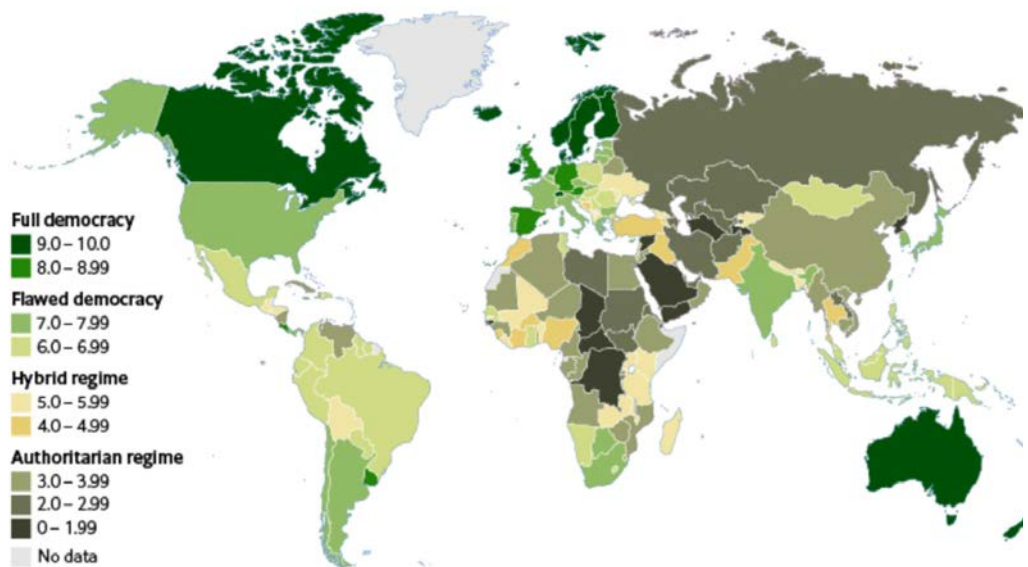
The index evaluates 60 indicators in 167 countries under the following categories: electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, the functioning of government, political participation, and political culture.

It then classifies each country under one of four regimes: full democracy, flawed democracy, hybrid regime, and authoritarian regime.

In 2018, only 20 full democracies existed in the world — the US was not among them.

## Democracy index 2018

Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit



The US lost its full democracy ranking in 2016 when public trust in its institutions experienced a severe decline. Meanwhile, Western Europe, with some of the oldest democracies in the world, regressed so much since 2006 that it has almost reached the level of its eastern counterparts.



According to the study, recessions like these manifest themselves in a number of ways. A few include:

- Decreasing participation in elections and politics
- Declining trust in institutions
- Growing influence of unelected, unaccountable institutions and expert bodies
- Declines in media freedoms and civil liberties

In exploring the role of media in democracy, the report talked about how newspapers, magazines, radio, and television continue to be important sources for accessing trusted journalism. But it also noted that the advent of the internet and social media (which should have created “a golden age for free speech”) has had its toll on people’s ability to separate fact from fiction.

This reality is being felt around the globe and has led to a number of [initiatives](#) that address the growing deficit in media literacy, particularly with today’s youth. The US, Canada, the [UK](#), [Europe](#), and even [Taiwan](#) are all actively working to educate people on the importance of media literacy and its role in a democratic society.

### The future of democracy and today’s youth

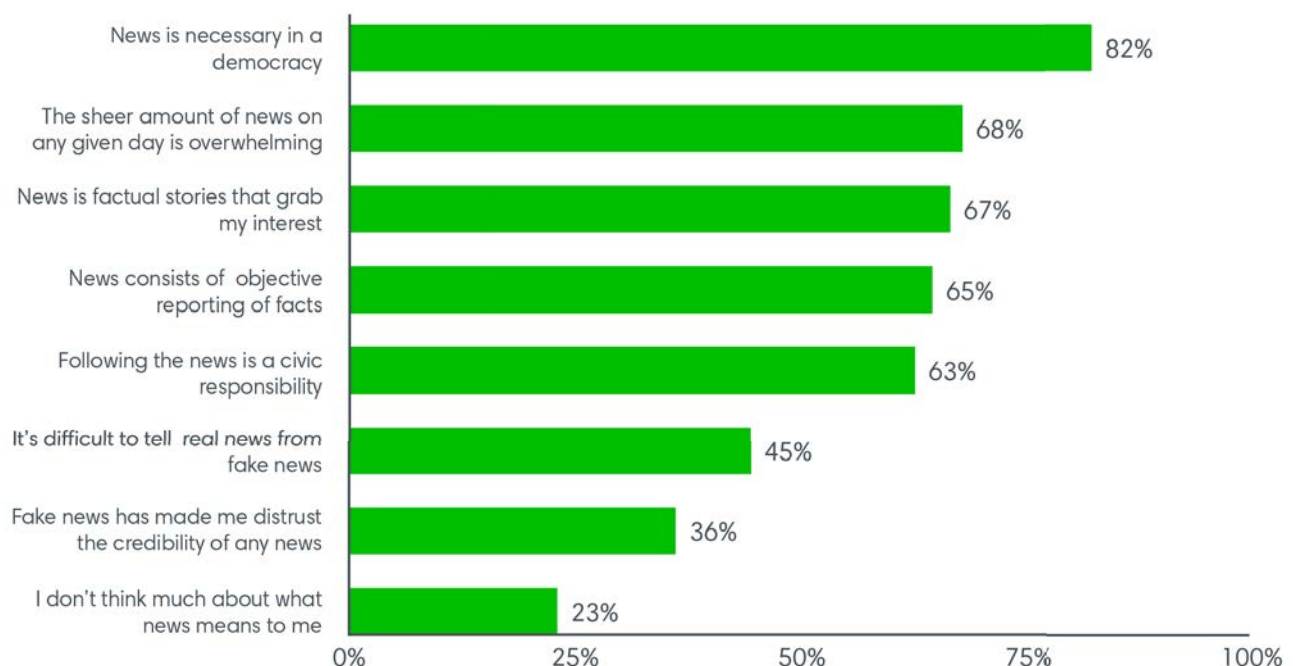
In an October 2018 report by [Project Information Literacy](#), researchers studied today’s youth’s attitudes towards traditional news media in the US.

Not surprisingly, younger generations find news to be an overwhelming firehose of headlines, posts, alerts, tweets, visuals, and conversations that bombard them on their mobile devices throughout the day.

That being said, most of them are not passive participants when it comes to news consumption, recognizing that it plays a critical role in helping them understand their world, socially interact, engage with learning communities, and participate in a democracy. College-age students say they believe that news is necessary in a democracy and recognize that engaging with it requires extra effort — more than just scrolling through social media.

## How students define the role of news in their lives

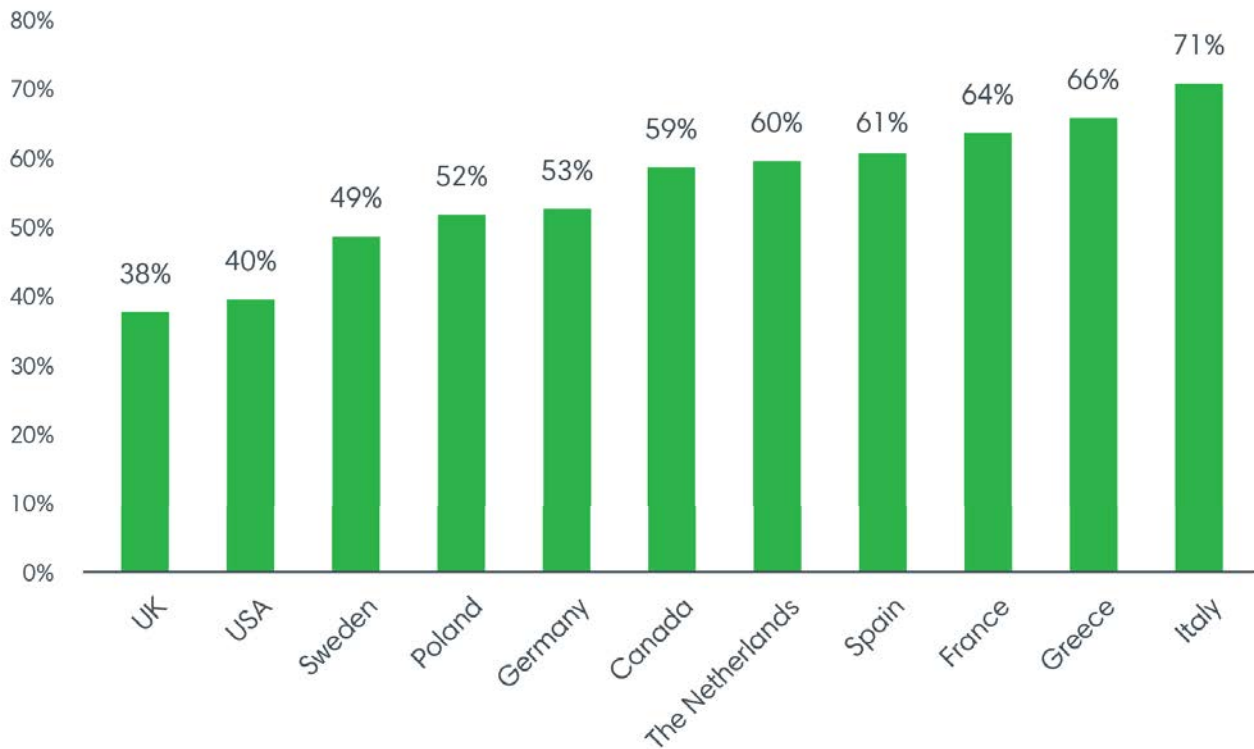
Source: Project Information Literacy (PIL) October 2018



But as much as many of them work hard at understanding and interpreting news, it doesn't appear to be an incentive for them to practice their civic duty during general election time as compared to their cohorts in other countries.

## Likely to vote in political elections (under 30)

Source: Eurobarometer, ONS, historical voter turnouts by country



Is inaction just an inherent part of being young? Will our youth suddenly wake up at 35 or 40 and decide it's time to get out and vote?

I've read a lot of research on the younger generations and I don't believe that just because their parents became more civically committed as they aged, Gen Ys and Zs will automatically do the same. Given how different these digital natives are from previous generations in terms of their early-life experiences, I'm not so sure I want to make the assumption that they'll follow in the footsteps of their forefathers and mothers and become civic actors in later years.

They need a little encouragement.

### The role of public libraries in media literacy

For over 200 years, public libraries have been bastions of democracy. Going beyond offering free, unfettered, and equal access to information, public librarians are staunch advocates for media literacy, continually championing efforts to nurture an informed constituency that will actively participate in the democratic process.

Many libraries give out [voter registration cards](#), host all-candidate meetings, promote democracy through public policy, and function as [polling stations](#) during elections — all critical factors in socio-economic development.

But what about those under the legal voting age? Is anything being done to encourage a passion for media literacy in them that will carry through to the ballot box? Quite a bit actually. Many public libraries are starting by [educating community members around fake news](#) — hosting events and panels, opening up media literacy forums, educating people on fact-checking tools, and posting media literacy tips on library websites, etc.

[Media literacy week](#) events are also being held across North America in partnership with the UK, and West Africa, where public and academic librarians can access resources to help them in their efforts to educate and promote media literacy in their communities and schools.

Instilling media literacy as a critical civic skill in people (of all ages) isn't what it should be yet. But the dedication public libraries put into their role in this endeavor has not been in vain.

In a [2018 study](#) by the Office for Library Advocacy of the American Library Association found that 55% of voters view the public library as an essential local institution, and 53% as a source of community pride.

## Voters frequently visit libraries in person and online

Source: *From Awareness to Funding Summary Report Voter Perceptions and Support of Public Libraries in 2018* (Office for Library Advocacy of the American Library Association)



**70%**

of voters have visited a public library in the last year, an average of

**8.6 visits**



**52%**

have visited the library's website in the last year, an average of

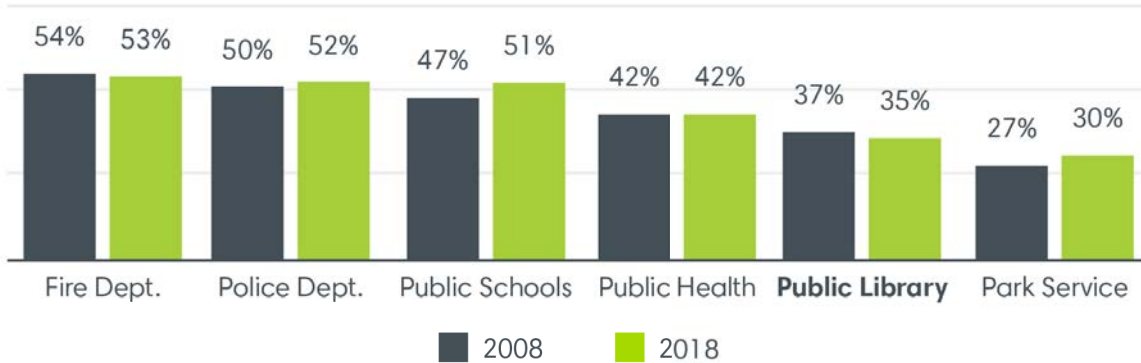
**7.6 visits**

And more than half (56%) of voters believe it's important to be able to download a variety of materials (e.g. news, eBooks) from the library's website.

But asking voters to put their money where their mouths are told a different story. When it came to budget cuts in a crisis, public libraries were not high on the list of social services to fund in 2018. People's opinions on public libraries being an essential service appear to be on the decline.

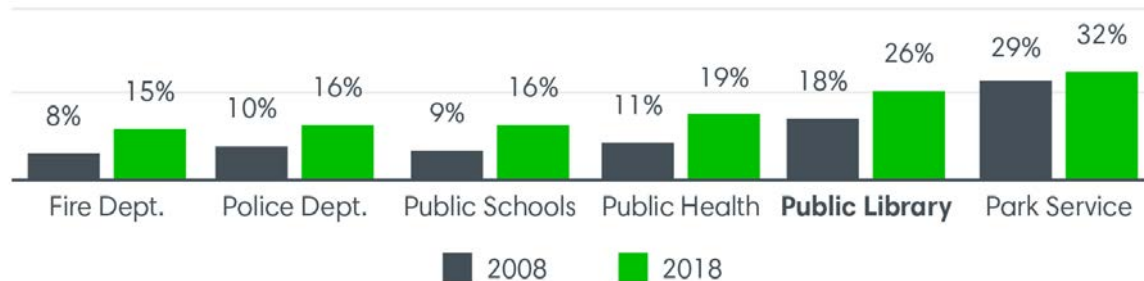
## I'd be willing to pay more in local taxes to better fund this

(% Top 3 Box Agreement: 8, 9, or 10 on a 10pt. scale)



## Should be one of the first things cut in a budget crisis

(% Top 3 Box Agreement: 8, 9, or 10 on a 10pt. scale)



As more and more people get access to the internet, the more they feel empowered to manage their lives without the intervention of professionals. They self-diagnose illnesses on medical sites, join online debates rather than physically participate in civic events, and look to social media for human connection and breaking news — websites which have proven to be ripe with misinformation, propaganda, and incitement to hatred.

The Fourth Estate and public libraries have their work cut out for them as they try to steer citizens towards the truth where events and behaviors of institutions and political leaders can be unearthed and scrutinized for evidence of corruption, misrepresentation, and collusion.

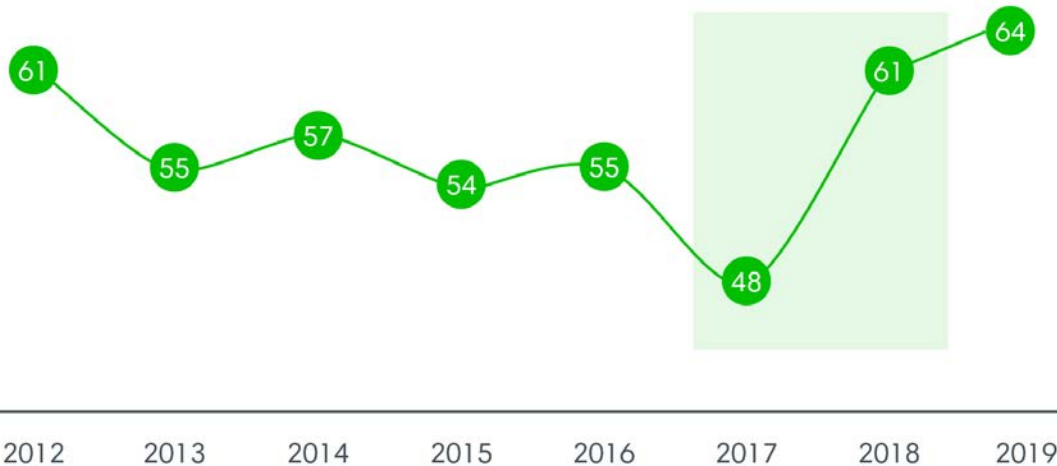
## Opportunity's knocking

Trust in mainstream media around the world rose to 64% in 2019.

## Trust Rebounds for Traditional Media

Percent trust in traditional media for general news and information

Source: Edelman's Trust Barometer 2018



And 73% of global citizens worry about false information or fake news being used as a weapon. So it's no surprise that people not only want, but need, access to credible news and information through reputable publishers like The Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, The Globe and Mail, The Guardian, The Independent, Newsweek, Forbes, Die Burger, The Times of India, New Zealand Herald, Süddeutsche Zeitung, The Straits Times, The Economic Times, Valor Economico, Perfil, and Vanity Fair, to name just a few.

Libraries understand that and publishers understand that, so there should be no debate over it, right? Let's just say, "It's complicated."

Most traditional publishers recognize their role as the fourth estate and guardian of truth. But, as for-profit companies, they are also obligated to their

shareholders — the people who fund the journalism.

So when those media houses think about offering their digital content to libraries, they worry about two things:

1. Will it cannibalize their existing revenue streams? Why should consumers subscribe to it when they can access it for free (from anywhere) using their library card?
2. Will their publication and related products and services diminish in perceived value because they are assumed to be free?

Meanwhile libraries, whose mandate is to democratize content, worry about their ever-tightening budgets and the escalating costs of other resources patrons need (e.g. journals).

Library directors have tough

choices to make, of that there is no doubt. But, thankfully thousands of them strongly believe that a democratic society cannot be built on communities afflicted with media illiteracy. And that a strong democracy is the foundation upon which higher education can thrive — where academic research can lead to important discoveries and make fundamental impacts on communities and the planet. They know that by giving their constituents access to trusted news sources and helping them appreciate their importance, the better off society will be.

If you would like to find out how your library can support your community with unlimited access to over 7,000 digital newspapers and magazines so they can make more informed decisions for themselves, their families, their community, and their country, let's talk! ●

# —

## EU Copyright directives and their impact on libraries

*“What will almost-free software and proliferating content do to commercial markets for content? How will people — writers, programmers, and artists — be compensated for creating value?*

*What business models will succeed in this foreign economy?*

*“In a new environment, such as the gravity field of the moon, laws of physics play out differently. On the Net, there is an equivalent change in “gravity” brought about by the ease of information transfer. We are entering a new economic environment — as different as the moon is from the earth — where a new set of physical rules will govern what intellectual property means, how opportunities are created from it, who prospers, and who loses.*

*“Chief among the new rules is that “content is free.”*

Esther Dyson

“Intellectual Value” - Wired Magazine July 1995

**T**he internet world is once again all ‘a-buzzin’ about digital copyright laws; this time because of the European Union’s adoption of the Directive on Copyright.

It’s not the first time the world has been up in arms about new regulations regarding intellectual property. Ever since the [first copyright act of 1710](#) was brought into existence, people have been debating the rights of creators with those of consumers and the dawn of the internet only served to turn up the volume on those arguments.

Some of you may recall in 1995 when the [Intellectual Property and the National Information Infrastructure](#) (NII White Paper) by the US White House Working Group was released. What was described as “no more than minor clarification and limited amendment” to the Copyright Act was quickly and roundly criticized as a [Copyright Grab](#), a “significant erosion of fair use” and a “threat to privacy rights” by library and academic institutions.

To put those criticisms in perspective: [According to the NII White Paper](#), if you were to give your paid copy of a newspaper to a friend to read, you would be infringing on the copyright of the publisher. I know, it sounds a bit silly today given how much is shared online, but those who lobbied against the white paper recommendations weren't waiting to see who got the last laugh.

Due to the persistent solidarity of libraries, academics, and ISPs, the NII White paper remained stalled in Congress and was eventually replaced with the Digital Millennium Copyright Act in 1998 — a US copyright law that implemented two of [World Intellectual Property Organization](#) (WIPO) treaties of 1996.

It wasn't perfect, but it also didn't lead to a "pay-per-use intellectual universe" as the American Library Association feared. And [fair use](#) is, for the most part, still alive and kicking online to this day, despite repeated attempts to handcuff it.

### Copyright is a double-edged sword

Copyright laws are a necessary evil in the protection of intellectual works, but it's hard to take a side when both sides of the debate could be right. It's all about context.

On one hand you have a creator who wants to be paid fairly for their work. Nothing wrong with that.

On the other you have a user who wants to share the creator's work with others to increase their own reputation perhaps, or just for fun — an act that technically breaks the law. But here's where being paid fairly comes into question. That act of sharing could also result in increasing the audience reach for

the creator and subsequently lead to new sources of income for the creator.

So who's right? Cop-out answer, "It depends."

I've always believed that quality content deserves compensation, regardless of its form. I also strongly believe in the democratization of information.

So how are both possible? In the newspaper and magazine space there are lots of businesses more than willing to sponsor access to content on behalf of their customers. Hotels, airlines, cruise lines, ferry lines, and libraries have been doing this for years. It's a win-win situation with no copyright cops required.

- Businesses can offer unique value to their customers in an eco-friendly way, saving money while growing brand equity and loyalty across all demographics.
- People get frictionless access to quality, trusted content and an engaging experience at no charge to them.
- Publishers are instantly served a massive captive audience they couldn't access on their own (let alone get them to pay), growing reach, auditable circulation, and revenues.

It's a monetization model where both creator compensation and democratization of content can live in harmony.

### The internet is a sharper double-edge sword

Today we live in an era of abundance, with endless access to knowledge and information. Life is good!

We have virtually unlimited, many-to-many communication capabilities with people all over the globe — a phenomenon that never existed prior to the internet and one that has completely inverted the company-consumer power funnel. People rule the internet, not corporations, governments, or institutions. Life is very good!

But with every silver lining, there also exist one or more threatening clouds.

Copyright infringement has reached epic proportions. Everyone steals — most without even realizing it.

Privacy is almost impossible to control unless one is forever off the grid.

Our rights to be anonymous during simple acts like reading, listening, or watching media are a thing of the past.

Efforts like Europe's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) are honorable attempts to protect one's right to control access to personal data, but has proven, so far, to be basically ineffective. Since GDPR went into effect in 2018, the vast majority of offending

businesses have not been fined for failing to protect user data. But even if those levies were enforced, they would be too insignificant to be taken seriously by many businesses. Even Google's US\$50M fine was nothing more than a slap on the wrist.

Life today is "complicated" to say the least and it's getting even more so.

### Constant copyrighting

When it comes to copyrighting, the only constant seems to be a never-ending exercise of write, review, reform, repeat. Since the advent of the internet, governments around the world have tried and failed to adequately police copyright liability on the web.

The enforcement of copyrights in the 1800s was manageable by the sheer nature of the physicality of the products being protected. But today, despite the very best efforts of very intelligent people, copyrights are next to impossible to safeguard online.

Yes, there were some exceptions to that. Think Napster. Even with 57 million users in the early 2000s, the peer-to-peer music sharing service

was forced out of business through multiple lawsuits because Napster made it easy to access music for free.

But on the flip side, you have Sony Corporation, who in 1976 introduced into the US its Betamax video recorder — a technology that allowed users to "time-shift" TV shows by recording them if they were not at liberty to watch them at the scheduled time. Universal and Disney saw this as a direct threat to their video libraries and sued Sony. To make a long drawn out lawsuit story short, the US Supreme Court finally ruled in favor of Sony saying that taping content for private entertainment purposes constituted fair use.

Now how is this different from Napster? Both offered file sharing applications intended for personal use. It's an interesting debate that could go on and on. But imagine if the results of Sony's suit went the other way around. Would any of us have VCRs/PVRs/DVRs in our living rooms today? But, I digress.

Getting back to the great debate over the latest EU copyright reforms...



## The current state of the EU Copyright Directive

When I think about what the European Union has tried to do to reform copyright law in the EU, I'm reminded of the old aphorism, "The road to hell is paved with good intentions."

When the EU decided to revamp the 2001 Copyright in the Information Society Directive, most people were all for the plan. To bring archaic legislation in line with today's internet realities by strengthening intellectual property protection and ensuring equitable remuneration for legal owners of that intellectual property was an honorable goal.

Not surprisingly, it was applauded by content producers (e.g. musicians, artists, newspaper and magazine publishers, movie studios, etc.) and criticized by internet purists — staunch internet users, tech companies, and advocates of human rights — who saw it as a way to overturn the fundamental principles of knowledge sharing.

It was a tumultuous two years of lobbying and protesting by the likes of [IFLA](#), [Wikimedia Foundation](#), [Change.org](#), [activists](#), and [academics](#) who pushed hard for changes to the proposed reforms. And despite not getting everything they wanted, good progress was made. What was finally ratified in March 2019 looked quite a bit different than what was presented in 2018 thanks to their, and many others', concerted efforts.

However, the two most contentious issues for libraries and schools last year are still raising eyebrows and blood pressures.

1. Article 15 (*previously numbered 11*) was designed to force big platforms to pay license fees (AKA snippet taxes) in order to publish links to news content on their sites. On paper it seems reasonable, but when translated into bits and bytes the new law will have many unintended consequences that could impact patrons, students, and society at large — not the least of which is its impact on an already increasingly media-illiterate society.

What Google offers to media in terms of free content discovery and monetizable website traffic is hugely beneficial to publishers. And I would argue that most publishers would agree that the alternative of Google not providing snippets is not an acceptable outcome for anyone. Next to direct access to websites, Google is the most popular way for people to [discover news](#). Publishers can't live without Google and they know it. It could be why most of them don't block Google from accessing content through their robot.txt files even though they have the power to do just that.

Facebook is a different animal altogether. While Google can still play the role of frenemy with media, Facebook has proven itself to be nobody's

friend. Famous for bait and switch scenarios, outright lies, false promises, and constant manipulation of newsfeeds, users, publishers, and advertisers to bolster its own bottom line, the social giant has become publisher enemy number one for good reason.

The problem is that the googles and facebooks of the world don't know how to talk to publishers and vice versa. So perhaps Article 15 could be a very good thing if it finally forces the opposing parties to come together, have a conversation, and negotiate an agreement — an equitable licensing framework that serves the needs of both publishers and platforms — and, most importantly, digital citizens.

2. Article 17 (*previously 13*) is probably the most controversial directive in terms of its impacts on freedom of expression and content sharing, despite the EU's assertion that the use of copyrighted material for "quotation, criticism, review, caricature as well as parody" will be allowed.

The fear is that the platforms on which these materials will be shared won't know if an individual's works are legal or not and will choose censorship over freedom of expression to play it safe.

And then there is the requirement to proactively prevent infringing content being displayed on a platform. Small platforms and startups are unlikely to have the technology to support this level of assessment, putting them at a disadvantage and reducing their ability to compete with the big guns.

In addition, these small sites will have fewer incentives to scale as their success will only lead to increased liability and more incentives to block user generated content. The irony of this whole directive is that in the end, the major platforms, the original targets of Article 17, will be the only places people and creators will be able to easily share their works.

So the lobbying and disputes are not over. As the law is implemented, more work will be needed at the individual country level to ensure that the implementation reflects not only the rule of law, but the spirit of it as well.

### Don't panic

Despite the fear, uncertainty and doubt surrounding the new EU legislation, there's no need to panic.

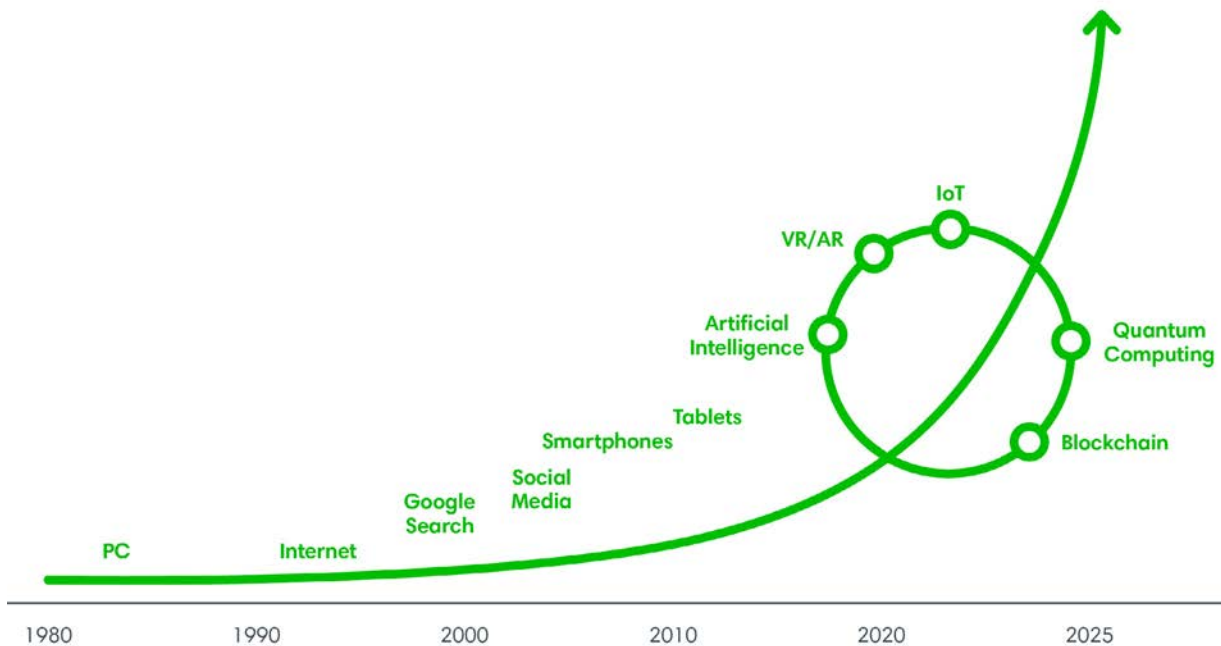
What's happening in the EU is not the end of the internet as we know it, just an attempt to balance the scales between those who champion unregulated internet freedoms and those who want to control them.

Yes, the new legislature does favor the content creators over consumers, but so did the copyright laws we've been living quite comfortably with for decades. And despite their advantage under this new law, I don't believe it will solve the systemic struggles most media companies face today. That's a whole other story, but it reminds me of something [Eric Schmidt](#), CEO of Alphabet Inc., once said...

*"The Internet is the first thing that humanity has built that humanity doesn't understand, the largest experiment in anarchy that we have ever had."*

The experiment isn't over. In fact, it's just starting to get interesting. [Technology is advancing](#) far faster than the human mind can comprehend. According to best-selling author, one of the world's leading futurists, and Google's director of engineering, [Ray Kurzweil](#), technology is moving so fast that by 2045 Artificial Intelligence will exceed human intelligence.

## The power of technology is growing exponentially



The internet is still in its infancy and we're about to enter into a very exciting era as it matures at lightning speed — evolving into a digital, virtual, and artificial world that governments and lawyers could never imagine.

So pay attention and take action where necessary, but don't panic. With governments' modus operandi of moving at a snail's pace, the whole copyright implementation and enforcement in the EU may end up being a *much ado about nothing*. ●

Business

# Virgin Galactic to go public by end of year

The Globe and Mail (Ottawa/Quebec Edition) 10 Jul 2019 ANKIT AJMERA  
JOSHUA FRANKLIN



Hundreds of people have paid or put down deposits to fly on one of Virgin Galactic's suborbital flights, on crafts such as this one, seen in February at Mojave Space Port.

**Richard Branson's company aims to fast-track route to markets with SPAC deal**

British billionaire Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic plans a stock-market listing by the end of the year, giving it the much-needed

funds to take on Jeff Bezos's Blue Origin and Elon Musk's SpaceX in the race to space.

The company will list its shares as part of a merger with Social Capital Hedosophia Holdings Corp., a special-purpose acquisition company (SPAC), which will also take a 49per-cent stake in Virgin Galactic for about US\$800-million, said a source who worked on the deal.

The SPAC deal allows Virgin Galactic to go public sooner, compared with a traditional initial public offering, which the company might have considered in six to nine months after its first commercial flight, the source said.

They were working on this deal for the best part of nine months. Part of the work was getting Mr. Branson comfortable with the idea of going public via a SPAC, a concept which he was not familiar with at the start of the process, according to the source.

Mr. Branson founded Virgin Galactic in 2004 to cash in on burgeoning demand for satellite launch services and, eventually, space travel, a market long dominated by industry stalwarts such as United Launch Alliance – a partnership between Boeing Co. and Lockheed Martin Corp.

But since its early days, his ambitious timeline for taking customers into space has suffered delays and setbacks.

In February, the company took a step closer to its goal of suborbital flights for space tourists when its rocket plane soared to the edge of space with a test passenger for the first time.

Rival Blue Origin has launched its New Shepard rocket to space, but its trips have not yet carried humans. SpaceX last year named Japanese billionaire Yusaku Maezawa as its first passenger on a voyage around the moon, tentatively scheduled for 2023.

Hundreds of people from 60 countries, including actor Leonardo DiCaprio and pop star Justin Bieber, have paid or put down deposits to fly on one of Virgin's suborbital flights. Some of Virgin Galactic's ticket holders have been waiting more than 14 years for their trip.

A 90-minute flight, which allows passengers to experience a few minutes of weightlessness, costs about US\$250,000.

The cost is expected to come down "dramatically" over the next decade as space travel becomes more accessible to common people, Mr. Branson told CNBC on Tuesday.

"I think we can do it a lot quicker than aviation did it."

Virgin's current reservations represent about US\$80-million in total collected deposits and US\$120-million of potential revenue.

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