Review: Virtue Information Literacy: Flourishing in an Age of Information Anarchy

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Review: *Virtue Information Literacy: Flourishing in an Age of Information Anarchy*, by Wayne Bivens-Tatum

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Abstract

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In his book, *Virtue Information Literacy: Flourishing in an Age of Anarchy*, Wayne Bivens-Tatum lays the foundation for a character or virtue-based system of information literacy outlining how maneuvering through a wide array of information types and sources requires the development of moral or intellectual character traits. Throughout his work, Bivens-Tatum explores eight essential virtues: open-mindedness, humility, modesty, courage, caution, thoroughness, justice, and information vigilance. Drawing support from scholars of philosophy, psychology, and information literacy, Bivens-Tatum provides a detailed introduction to the idea of virtue information literacy (VIL) as well as the process and implications of this literacy regarding misinformation or "fake news." The foundation of scholarship concerning VIL within various disciplines introduces the theory and practices of VIL for the explicit purpose of utilizing the skills and patterns of VIL to address the growing issue of misinformation. *Virtue Information Literacy: Flourishing in an Age of Anarchy* appeals to both readers with a developed interest in theoretical philosophical frameworks within information literacy and those engaged with instilling quality information seeking and processing skills as a means of combatting misinformation. Whether they are interested in exploring the framework of VIL or working to help individuals navigate the landscape of misinformation, the principles laid out in this book are relevant and useful to the many individuals involved with information literacy instruction.

This book gives a detailed overview of each of the eight virtues and their relation to both VIL and the spread of misinformation. In nine chapters, Bivens-Tatum discusses these moral and intellectual virtues and the role of VIL within the ACRL *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education.* Each chapter relates to one or more virtues while simultaneously building upon the previously discussed virtues to provide the reader with a complete picture of VIL and its role within misinformation and the Framework. In mapping each of these virtues to a frame of the Framework, Bivens-Tatum offers a fresh and useful perspective on the age-old issue of how librarians can help to slow the spread of misinformation by reinforcing the knowledge practices associated with each frame.

Chapters 1 and 2 serve as the foundation of the work, linking moral and character traits to

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information literacy skills and analyzing the intellectual virtues and vices that affect the ability to decipher misinformation. These chapters work together to highlight the philosophical and psychological background of information literacy skills as Bivens-Tatum discusses the external influences that may impact the development of the intellectual virtues and vices necessary to develop key information literacy skills. The foundation of VIL may be of particular interest to readers who wish to further investigate the nuanced connections between virtues and information literacy skills.

Just as Chapters 1 and 2 lay the foundation for VIL, Chapters 3 through 6 lay the groundwork to fully explore virtues as markers for information literacy skills. Building upon the foundation of Chapters 1 and 2, these chapters discuss the specific virtues that may influence the ability to learn, retain, and fully utilize information literacy skills, particularly in the case of heated political and controversial issues. Chapter 3 begins to explore the Framework through the lens of VIL as it highlights the frame of "Scholarship as Conversation." With this chapter, Bivens-Tatum affirms the significance of virtues to participating in scholarly conversation beyond simply listening to like-minded voices. Instead, Bivens-Tatum points out that virtues such as open-mindedness, intellectual humility, intellectual courtesy, and intellectual thoroughness play a crucial role in the engagement of productive scholarly conversations. Chapter 4 continues the exploration of the Framework as it links essential virtues for combatting misinformation to the frame of "Authority Is Constructed and Contextual." In this chapter, Bivens-Tatum delves deeply into what authority means and how it relates to intellectual virtues such as open-mindedness, intellectual courage, and intellectual caution. As a common frame utilized to instill proper investigation of resources, particularly those that may be classified as "fake news," this chapter may be of great interest to readers engaging with patrons to better identify elements of misinformation. Building on the groundwork from Chapters 3 and 4, Chapter 5 considers the authority of the scholarly self. This chapter looks at the social context and the virtues necessary to find authority within the scholarly world but also remain open to other's ideas, even if they contradict the scholar's previous convictions. By engaging with the varying senses of self present throughout the research process and within the process of navigating misinformation, Bivens-Tatum contends that the virtues of intellectual courage and intellectual humility are essential for individuals to maneuver the sea of misinformation and to better situate themselves within the scholarly conversation. Chapter 6 continues the investigation into scholarly conversation as Bivens-Tatum lays the foundation of the role of "truth" within information literacy. Bivens-Tatum argues that truth is contextual and that

individuals can more readily engage in scholarly conversation and remain open to new information and new understandings by applying the intellectual virtues of humility, open-mindedness, epistemic modesty, curiosity, and thoroughness.

As the preceding chapters focused on the virtues necessary for ideal information literacy practices, Chapter 7 acknowledges that the ideal is unrealistic in a world with constant distractions and plentiful misinformation. This chapter, unlike chapters before it, focuses specifically upon the preparations necessary to live in a world of information anarchy using the virtue of information vigilance. Bivens-Tatum explores the tactics of information vigilance and the relation this virtue has to misinformation as he emphasizes how the mindless processing of information can lead to biases and prejudices that individuals may not even realize are present. With this chapter, Bivens-Tatum gets to the heart of the framework of VIL and calls attention to the benefits of curating these virtues in a clear and relatable manner.

The final two chapters, 8 and 9, address VIL not only as a framework but also as a way of life. Chapter 8 builds the groundwork of information asceticism as it is expressed within and outside of the context of information literacy. Chapter 9 brings together the virtues and places VIL into a universal perspective, examining how VIL can lead to psychological well-being and incentivize individuals to become their better selves by using the virtues outlined in the VIL framework to better navigate the current landscape of information anarchy.

Overall, *Virtue Information Literacy: Flourishing in an Age of Information Anarchy* offers a detailed view into the emerging framework of VIL as a means of combatting the ever-growing problem of misinformation. Due to the innate connection between intellectual virtues and misinformation, this book would prove interesting and useful to many readers engaging in the instruction of information literacy skills and practices. As an emerging framework of information literacy, this book provides detailed background and theory to support the claims of fostering intellectual virtues as a means of assisting individuals in maneuvering misinformation that many disciplines, even outside of librarianship, may find valuable in developing honed and intentional information literacy skills. While this work relies heavily upon psychological and philosophical theories that some readers may find daunting, it is well worth the effort to delve into the intellectual virtues that influence information seeking and processing skills. As librarians continuously ask, "How can we help individuals better maneuver the changing landscape of misinformation?", *Virtue Information Literacy: Flourishing in an Age of Information Anarchy* explores a carefully detailed response.

Hawkes
Review of Virtue Information Literacy

[BOOK REVIEW]