

VOL. 45
NO. 1
2025

PhJLIS

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ISSN
2719-0471
(Online)

Ph JLIS

VOL. 45
NO. 1
2025

PHILIPPINE JOURNAL OF LIBRARIANSHIP AND INFORMATION

ISSN 2719-0471 (Online)

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EDITORIAL

When More Information is Not Enough

Kathleen Lourdes B. Obille
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Elections are more commonly understood as political activities, but they are also highly informational events. These are occasions when people create and share information and make decisions based on what they gather and learn. Political candidates communicate their platforms in various formats, from traditional brochures, flyers, billboards, and television and radio advertisements to newer digital media such as websites, e-mails, live streams, and podcasts. Campaign managers strategize and plan their candidates' image and messaging, coordinate schedules, and manage public events. Voters seek, evaluate, share, and critique political information, then make decisions based on it. They discuss candidates' positive and negative aspects with fellow voters and participate in the campaign process by putting up campaign posters in designated places and going from one community to another to share campaign materials. Non-voters also seek and share political information; even if they cannot vote, they also try to influence their friends' and family's choices. These activities of creating, sharing, receiving, and making sense of information in the context of elections, whether done in traditional means or via digital or online environments, constitute information practices. As

defined, these are the ways by which “people in different contexts seek and use information” (Pilerot & Ekström, 2025, p. 465), and social contexts, dispositions, experiences, and even emotions shape these practices. Social media and other digital technologies also contribute to changing information practices across contexts. They paved the way for more ways of interacting and made more information available. But they have also created challenges for people, especially in how they make sense of these developments, such as misinformation and disinformation, echo chambers, and algorithmic targeting. Because elections are informational events in which people engage in various information practices, we should conduct further research to examine what information is produced, how people engage with it, and the ethical and societal implications of these practices to help people understand their own practices and consequently enable them to become critical, reflective, and responsible creators and users of information not just in the context of elections but in every aspect of public and social life.

The Philippine National Elections in 2022 saw an increased use of digital media for political campaigns.

This was an alternative to in-person campaigning because the Philippines and the rest of the world were still reeling from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Restrictions on large physical gatherings prompted candidates to turn to digital media to compensate for these limitations. This year, digital platforms are no longer a mere alternative to traditional campaigning; they have become a primary ground for political campaigns. Developments in digital technologies have expanded how political information is shared and circulated, thereby increasing the reach of campaign materials. In traditional face-to-face campaigns, physical presence, location, time, and other logistical factors limit how many people they can reach. In contrast, digital campaign formats effectively reduce geographic barriers. Although political candidates may not be physically present, they can reach people through messages delivered via videos, livestreams, and other digital content. Social media has become “freely accessible public spaces that invite all users to make interventions” (Habermas, 2022, p. 166). These digital media allow interaction between candidates and the public, which traditional media cannot afford. Digital media allow the public to show support, disagreement, or criticism through comments and reactions. These affordances enable the public to transform from mere audiences to participants in the political discourse.

Social media use has “transformed the public sphere” (Smith & Niker, 2021, p. 613), changing how political candidates and supporters interact and redefining information practices in the process. Instead of a one-way flow of information from candidates and campaign materials to the public as consumers, candidates and the public are now on equal footing. A candidate can share information by livestreaming political rallies, turning messages and speeches into short-form videos, creating posters from key points from their speeches or political platform, or crafting a meme from a blooper or behind-the-scenes moment in their campaigns. The public is no longer a passive receiver of these materials. They can comment on content created by their candidates or fellow voters and supporters, expressing support, disagreement, criticism, suggestions for alternative actions, and the like. Social media platforms have facilitated better communication and interaction between the political candidates and the public. In traditional campaigning, comments and suggestions from supporters and critics alike had little chance of reaching the candidates; they might circulate only among peers and colleagues, but with social media, reactions have become almost instantaneous. These platforms have, in a way, become spheres of communication, “understood neither as public nor private, ...that had previously been reserved for private

correspondence but is not inflated into a new and intimate kind of public sphere (Habermas, 2022, p. 166). Comments from the public, which were limited to their circles before social media, are now available to wider audiences and networks. These comments are no longer mere responses or reactions; they have become information that others use to form their opinions and perceptions.

With more information about political candidates and more avenues for interaction, the public should have better means to make better decisions about whom to vote for. Those who have not attended political rallies were able to participate because these were livestreamed. Those who haven’t had the chance to meet any political candidate were able to meet one because the candidates have set up their own social media accounts and gone live on social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and many others to communicate with their supporters. These platforms also enabled the public to express their support for their candidates through comments, reactions, and other forms of online engagement. Arguably, being presented with more information and having more avenues for interaction does not necessarily result in ideal outcomes such as better understanding and more informed decisions. More information led to confusion, making it difficult to sift through available information and distinguish credible sources from inaccurate or misleading content. To complicate matters, the use of AI-generated content “further contributes to misinformation through deepfakes..., algorithmic biases, and hyper-realistic synthetic media” (Schipper, 2025, p. e39-2)

With more platforms for people to voice their views and engage in discussion, electoral and political discourse should be more inclusive, participatory, and democratic. However, more avenues for expression through these platforms do not necessarily translate to more democratic engagements. Participating in political discussions has become more complex because of the diverse range of perspectives and claims. In 2022, “there was a sharp increase in the use of the internet to obtain election information” (Arugay & Baquisal, 2022, p. 556), and while this enabled voters to show support, these platforms have also become venues for disinformation that polarized the elections. There were heated discussions online, calling people names and leaving derogatory comments (Laya, 2022), mocking others, and consequently sowing disgust. Algorithmic targeting and sorting (Stewart, et al., 2022) have limited the reach of messages, contributing to fragmented information exchanges and the creation of echo chambers. These platforms have also enabled populism and polarizing communication (Olaniran & Williams,

2020). Navigating these platforms has also been complicated by people's social relationships, where family, friends, colleagues, and online communities shape what information people trust or reject. On the other hand, exchanges on these platforms can strengthen or break social relationships, as seen in the prevalent cancel culture in both online and offline communities.

To a certain extent, the benefits of social media in electoral processes are now outweighed by its harms. While social media is deemed to “facilitate public participation, organize public conversation, and curate public opinion” (Balkin, 2020, para 21-23), it also proliferates echo chambers, cancel culture, populism, conspiracy theories, polarization, and the spread of mis- and disinformation. These harms do not merely affect individuals and their information practices; they also translate to institutional and societal issues. Collective distrust in agencies threatens democracy, as McKay and Tenove (2021) wrote, “disinformation campaigns can morally denigrate certain groups or individuals” (p. 709), making disrespect and injustices prevalent. If these practices go unchecked, the consequences can extend beyond social media and the digital sphere. When prejudices are reinforced, when trust in institutions erodes, and when respect for human rights is diminished in online and offline spheres, social order and public welfare are put at risk. The implications of information practices in social media and society are not just technological but ethical and social, as they affect not only how individuals relate to each other but how society functions as a whole.

Librarians and information professionals are positioned to raise awareness about these concerns and help individuals navigate the complexities of information environments. More than simply providing media and information literacy instruction or trying to control and impose authority over what information is available, librarians and information professionals should first understand and further study information practices in various contexts to provide informed solutions to these problems. Studies on political information can be done to determine how people decide which to accept or reject, how they interpret, negotiate, and respond to what they find online as well as in traditional media, and how these practices shape their relationships and communities. Librarians and information professionals should also continue to provide access to information and help individuals evaluate and manage political information they encounter. Beyond the technical and practical aspects of media and information literacy, individuals should be taught to engage with information ethically and critically. They should also be taught how to become socially responsible with their information

practices, so that even when they encounter an avalanche of mis- and disinformation, they can very well survive it.

This issue features research articles on information practices, providing insights on how these can be conducted in different contexts. Ferrer courageously discusses information practices on a once taboo topic of consensual non-monogamous relationships. She acknowledges that with the democratization of information, more information is now available and accessible, enabling informed learning about this social relationship. She argues that more information allows individuals to make sense of their perspectives and transform their understanding and experience of the concept, which was once limited by “social context, relational dynamics, stigma, and limited public discourse.” Ponciano shares her systematic review of literature on feminist activists' information practices, offering insights into how they share, seek, and use information across various aspects of activism. This article shows that social media helps spread messages and amplify marginalized voices, arguing that social media and information practices are multifaceted.

De Castro et al. looked into how state colleges and universities allocate and share their subscription-based resources. This article offers insight into how institutions prioritize resources based on needs, secure additional funding to support them, and pursue collaborative initiatives for information sharing. Related to information literacy, this article underscores the importance of helping library patrons become familiar with available resources, a task librarians and information professionals should carry out even outside the confines of libraries. Zulueta discusses censorship and intellectual freedom in academic libraries within the backdrop of Foucault's power/knowledge. She shows how librarians and concerned groups have struggled against censorship, illustrating how libraries can control collections and how that control can lead to different outcomes. According to her, the control that librarians exercise over their collections is motivated by the need to organize these resources to facilitate information discovery and learning. On the other hand, censorship as a form of control, is motivated by the need to limit knowledge, and this is what librarians struggle against. Taking insight from this article, information on social media should not be controlled, nor should librarians and information professionals exercise authority over it.

Finally, VanScoy's message during the Gabriel A. Bernardo Memorial Lecture Series reiterates the importance of balancing theory and practice in LIS education and practice. While LIS is a practice-oriented

field, “theory often operates as a ‘silent foundation,’ shaping how practitioners interpret user needs, make decisions, and design services.” She concludes by saying that “narratives are not inherited conditions but practices the field can revise.” This resonates with this editorial, which argues that librarians and information professionals can and should move beyond what they have been traditionally taught to help clients navigate the complexities of traditional and digital information. Librarians and information professionals should be at the forefront when more information is not enough because the public needs tools such as critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and social awareness to survive an avalanche of information.

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The PhJLIS is published by the School of Library and Information Studies, University of the Philippines Diliman.

45th Gabriel A. Bernardo Memorial Lecture

The Theory-Practice ~~Gap~~ Link: Changing the Narrative about Theory in Library and Information Science

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INTRODUCTION

The relationship between theory and practice has long been a defining concern in library and information science (LIS). It is commonly framed in terms of division: a 'gap,' a 'gulf,' or a 'divide,' separating researchers from practitioners, and educators from students. This framing is deeply embedded in both scholarly discourse and professional conversation, shaping how the field understands itself.

It is particularly meaningful to revisit this issue in the context of the Gabriel Adriano Bernardo Memorial Lecture. Bernardo, often described as the doyen of Philippine librarianship, was known for his "burning passion for the ideals and accomplishments of scholarship" (Vallejo, 2007, p. 3). His career reflects a model of librarianship in which scholarship and practice are not opposing domains but mutually reinforcing pursuits. As both a librarian and a scholar, Bernardo exemplified a professional identity that complicates the very notion of a divide between theory and practice.

The title of this paper enacts that complication visually. By striking through the word "gap" and writing "link" in its place, it performs the very reframing the paper proposes, a deliberate act of revision in the language the field uses to describe itself. Crucially, the crossed-out word remains visible. The gap narrative is not erased so much as acknowledged and consciously displaced. This small typographic gesture captures the paper's central claim: that the relationship between theory and practice is not fixed by some inherent feature of LIS, but is constituted, sustained, and potentially transformed through the words the field chooses to describe itself.

Working from Bernardo's model of scholarship and practice as 'mutually reinforcing pursuits,' this paper asks whether the widely accepted narrative of a theory-practice gap accurately reflects the realities of LIS education and professional work, or whether it is, at least in part, sustained through the ways the field talks about itself. Drawing on two empirical studies focused on information behavior theory, the paper argues that the theory-practice gap is overstated and self-reinforcing. It proposes instead that 'gap' gives way to 'link': theory understood as a unifying concept that highlights connection, interaction, and shared purpose across the field.

THE PERSISTENCE OF THE THEORY-PRACTICE GAP

The idea that theory and practice are divided has been extensively discussed in LIS literature. Crowley (1999, 2005) describes a "gulf" between faculty conceptions of useful research and practitioner perspectives, suggesting that practitioners often perceive scholarly literature as peripheral to their everyday work. Crowley (2005) attributes this divide to "divergent subcultures" across "a structural and contextual chasm" (p. 2).

These perceptions are not limited to the research-practice relationship; they are also reflected in LIS education. Instructors frequently report that students question the value of theory, viewing it as abstract and disconnected from professional practice (VanScoy et al., 2022b). The metaphor of teaching theory as "like putting broccoli in a quiche" (a particularly evocative quotation from one of our participants) captures this perception vividly, suggesting that theory must be

disguised within more appealing, skills-oriented content (VanScoy et al., 2022b, p.9).

Such characterizations contribute to a shared narrative in which theory is positioned as difficult, impractical, and undervalued. Over time, this narrative becomes normalized, shaping expectations among students, educators, and practitioners alike. As Lakoff and Johnson (2008) argue, metaphors are not merely descriptive; they are constitutive. They shape how people understand relationships and act within them. Repeated use of spatial metaphors such as ‘gap’ or ‘gulf’ reinforces the assumption that theory and practice are fundamentally separate. In doing so, it may obscure the ways in which they are already interconnected.

THEORY IN LIS EDUCATION: INSTRUCTOR PERSPECTIVES

Empirical evidence from LIS education complicates the dominant narrative of division. A series of studies examining the integration of information behavior theories, models, and concepts (referred to inclusively as “theory” in this paper) into foundational reference courses provides insight into how theory is actually taught and perceived. These studies included a syllabus analysis, instructor interviews, and a survey of instructors across LIS programs in the United States (VanScoy et al., 2022a, 2022b; VanScoy, Julien, et al., 2024).

The syllabus analysis revealed that nearly one-third of courses did not explicitly include information behavior theory. Many courses emphasized practical skills or attempted to balance conceptual and applied content. At first glance, this finding appears to support the notion of a theory-practice divide (VanScoy et al., 2022a). However, instructor perspectives, explored in a subsequent study, present a more complex picture. While some instructors reported that students initially resist theory, many also observed that students come to appreciate its value over time (VanScoy et al., 2022b). A follow-up survey revealed that a substantial proportion of instructors believe students either value theory from the outset or develop an appreciation for it as they progress through their studies (VanScoy, Julien, et al., 2024). Importantly, instructors themselves consistently emphasized the importance of theory. They viewed it as central to graduate-level education, providing a conceptual foundation that enables students to move beyond procedural knowledge. Theory was seen as supporting adaptability, critical thinking, and the ability to apply knowledge across contexts (VanScoy et al., 2022b; VanScoy, Julien, et al., 2024).

At the same time, instructors often reproduced the narrative that students “do not like theory,” even when their own experiences suggested otherwise. This tension between experience and discourse is significant. It suggests that the theory-practice gap may be perpetuated not only by structural factors, but also by shared assumptions that persist despite contradictory evidence. In this sense, the gap may be less a reflection of actual disconnection and more a product of how the field collectively frames the relationship between theory and practice.

THEORY IN PRACTICE: LIBRARIAN PERSPECTIVES

A complementary line of research examined the relevance of information behavior theory in professional practice, focusing on public library reference work. Rather than assessing formal knowledge of theory, the study explored whether librarians recognized theoretical concepts in their own work. Participants were presented with plain-language descriptions of information behavior theories, models, and concepts (again, referred to here as “theories”) and asked to evaluate their relevance and provide examples from their professional experience. The findings demonstrate that all of the theories examined were considered relevant by at least some participants. Librarians were able to identify clear and compelling connections between theoretical constructs and their day-to-day work (VanScoy, Hands, et al., 2024).

In many cases, theory was used implicitly. Librarians described situations that aligned closely with established concepts—such as mediated information seeking or information poverty—without necessarily naming them as theoretical frameworks. At the same time, some participants reported using theoretical concepts explicitly, incorporating terms such as “berrypicking” or “satisficing” into their professional vocabulary (VanScoy, Hands, et al., 2024).

The findings from these studies suggest that theory functions as a conceptual framework that underpins practice, even when it is not consciously invoked. Rather than being absent, theory often operates as a “silent foundation,” shaping how practitioners interpret user needs, make decisions, and design services. This perspective challenges the assumption that practitioners are disengaged from theory. Instead, it points to a more integrated relationship, in which theoretical understanding informs practice in both explicit and implicit ways. Practitioners may not always describe their work in theoretical terms, but their actions often reflect theoretical insights.

FROM DIVIDE TO LINK

Taken together, these findings call into question the prevailing narrative of a theory-practice gap. Instructors value theory and observe that students can learn to appreciate it. Practitioners recognize theoretical concepts in their work and, in some cases, draw on them explicitly. The boundary between theory and practice appears far more permeable than the language of “gap” or “gulf” suggests. This raises the possibility that the divide is not only overstated but also perpetuated through discourse. By consistently framing theory and practice as separate, the field may inadvertently reinforce the very division it seeks to address.

Reframing the relationship as a theory-practice *link* offers a more productive alternative. The concept of a link emphasizes connection, interaction, and mutual reinforcement. It positions theory and practice as interdependent, rather than oppositional, and highlights their shared role in advancing the field. This shift in framing is not merely semantic. It has practical implications for how LIS education is structured, how research is conducted and communicated, and how practitioners engage with scholarly knowledge. It encourages a more integrated approach, in which theory and practice are understood as complementary dimensions of professional and scholarly work.

STRENGTHENING THE THEORY-PRACTICE LINK

If theory and practice are understood as linked rather than divided, then strengthening that link becomes a shared responsibility across the field.

In educational contexts, instructors can play a key role by making theory more accessible and explicitly connecting it to practice. This includes designing assignments that encourage students to apply theoretical concepts to real-world situations, as well as drawing on examples from professional contexts to illustrate abstract ideas. Helping students relate theory to their own experiences can further enhance engagement and understanding. Balance is also important. Students benefit from developing both practical skills and conceptual understanding, but these should not be treated as separate domains. Integrating theory and practice within courses can help students see how each informs the other.

For researchers, strengthening the link involves engaging more directly with practice. Crowley (1999) emphasizes the importance of studying practitioners' tacit knowledge, suggesting that useful theory emerges from

close attention to professional experience. Collaborative approaches to research can help ensure that theoretical developments are grounded in real-world contexts.

Communication is another critical factor. Differences in discourse between researchers and practitioners have been identified as a barrier to integration (Julien & Williamson, 2010; McKechnie et al., 2008). Researchers can contribute to bridging this divide by presenting findings in accessible ways and clearly articulating their relevance to practice.

Practitioners also have an important role to play. Engaging with theory—whether through reading, professional development, or collaboration—can enhance professional decision-making. As Kern (2014) argues, library work involves more than following established procedures; it requires navigating complex and evolving situations. Theory provides frameworks for thinking through these challenges, supporting more informed and adaptable practice.

Ultimately, strengthening the theory-practice link requires a shift away from a “we-they” mentality toward a more integrated understanding of the field. Educators, researchers, and practitioners are all engaged in a shared enterprise, and theory can serve as a common language that connects their work.

CONCLUSION

The narrative of a theory-practice gap has shaped LIS for decades, influencing how the field conceptualizes its structure and priorities. However, the evidence presented here suggests that this narrative is incomplete. Theory is not absent from practice, nor is it uniformly resisted in educational settings. Instead, it is often embedded, sometimes implicitly, in both domains.

Reframing the relationship as a theory-practice link offers a more accurate and constructive perspective. It highlights the connections that already exist and provides a foundation for strengthening them.

This perspective also resonates with the legacy of Gabriel Adriano Bernardo. As a librarian and a scholar, Bernardo's career exemplified the integration of theory and practice. His commitment to scholarship was not separate from his professional work, but central to it. In this sense, he represents a model for the kind of unified field that this paper advocates.

Recognizing theory as a unifying force does not eliminate the challenges associated with integrating research and practice. However, it shifts the focus from

division to connection, from barriers to possibilities. By changing how the field talks about theory, it becomes possible to change how theory functions within it. The title of this paper offers a small but deliberate illustration. Crossing out "gap" and writing "link" in its place does not pretend the older narrative never existed; the strikethrough leaves a trace, acknowledging decades of framing the field cannot simply wish away. But the visible substitution insists that the framing was always a choice, and that another choice is available. The gesture is modest, a single word revised in a title, yet it models in miniature what the paper argues at length: that narratives are not inherited conditions but practices the field can revise. Rather than viewing theory as something that divides LIS, it can be understood as something that brings it together—linking educators, researchers, and practitioners in a shared commitment to advancing knowledge and improving practice.

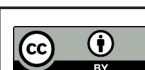
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The PhJLIS is published by the School of Library and Information Studies, University of the Philippines Diliman. ISSN 2719-0471 (Online)

Information Practices of Feminist Activists in Social Media: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

This systematic literature review synthesizes 20 peer-reviewed studies published between 2016 and 2025 to map the information practices of feminist activists on social media. Guided by the PRISMA 2020 framework, the review identifies information sharing as the core practice, expressed across seven interrelated dimensions: mobilization and organizing, framing and resistance, storytelling and visibility, emotional and affective labor, disruption and activist tactics, education and awareness, and debate and argumentation. While most studies emphasize information dissemination, other crucial information practices (such as information seeking, organization, and verification) remain underexplored. Future research should address these gaps and broaden both geographic and platform scope to more fully capture the diverse information practices that shape feminist digital activism.

Keywords: feminist activism, information practices, digital feminism, social media, systematic literature review

INTRODUCTION

Feminist activism has increasingly moved into digital spaces, with social media platforms becoming vital arenas for advocacy, resistance, and community-building. From global hashtag movements like #MeToo (Voina et al., 2020; Roth-Cohen, 2022; Rovira-Sancho, 2023) to more localized campaigns such as in Fiji (Brimacombe et al., 2018), China (Hou, 2020; Wang & Chang, 2024; Wang & Whyke, 2025), and Chile (Errázuriz, 2021), activists are using platforms like Twitter, Facebook, TikTok, and Weibo to mobilize support, share knowledge, and challenge dominant narratives. For instance, in Fiji, women's rights advocates used Facebook and Twitter to disseminate information and participate in policy debates, illustrating how social media amplifies feminist voices at the local level (Brimacombe et al., 2018). In China, activists have reinterpreted the feminist principle of the personal being

political to expose everyday gendered inequalities on Weibo (Hou, 2020). Globally, the #MeToo and #WhyIStayed campaigns demonstrated how digital platforms can be used to contest victim-blaming discourses, amplify survivors' voices, and build feminist coalitions across borders (Voina et al., 2020; Storer & Rodriguez, 2020). These platforms offer both opportunities and constraints, like facilitating rapid information exchange while exposing activists to censorship, harassment, and platform surveillance (Fredenburg, 2025; Sigurdardottir et al., 2024).

While scholars have widely explored the discursive and ideological elements of online feminist activism, less attention has been paid to the everyday information practices that sustain it. Information practices refer to the socially and culturally situated ways in which people seek, share, create, organize, and use information in their daily lives (Savolainen, 2007). In the context of

feminist activism, understanding these practices matters because they reveal not just what activists do online, but how they do it and why, shedding light on the various strategies, constraints, and negotiations that shape the circulation of feminist knowledge. These practices are deeply political because they are never neutral. Decisions about what information to share, how to frame it, on which platform, and for which audience are all shaped by existing power relations that either reinforce or challenge them. They determine whose voices are amplified and whose are silenced, whose narratives gain credibility and whose are dismissed. As Linabary et al. (2020), and Clark-Parsons (2021) note, these practices shape the visibility, credibility, and resilience of feminist messages and communities online, making them essential to any understanding of how digital activism works.

This review addresses that gap by systematically analyzing the information practices of feminist activists across global contexts. It seeks to uncover common patterns, highlight variation across platforms and regions, and examine the complex ways in which feminist knowledge is created, maintained, and circulated in digital environments. Uncovering these patterns matters because it allows us to see not just what feminist activists do online, but what makes their efforts effective, what limits them, and where opportunities for

stronger and more inclusive digital activism lie.

Based on the highlighted problem statement, research questions were established to guide the exploration of the study's scope. Generally, this study aims to primarily answer the following main questions:

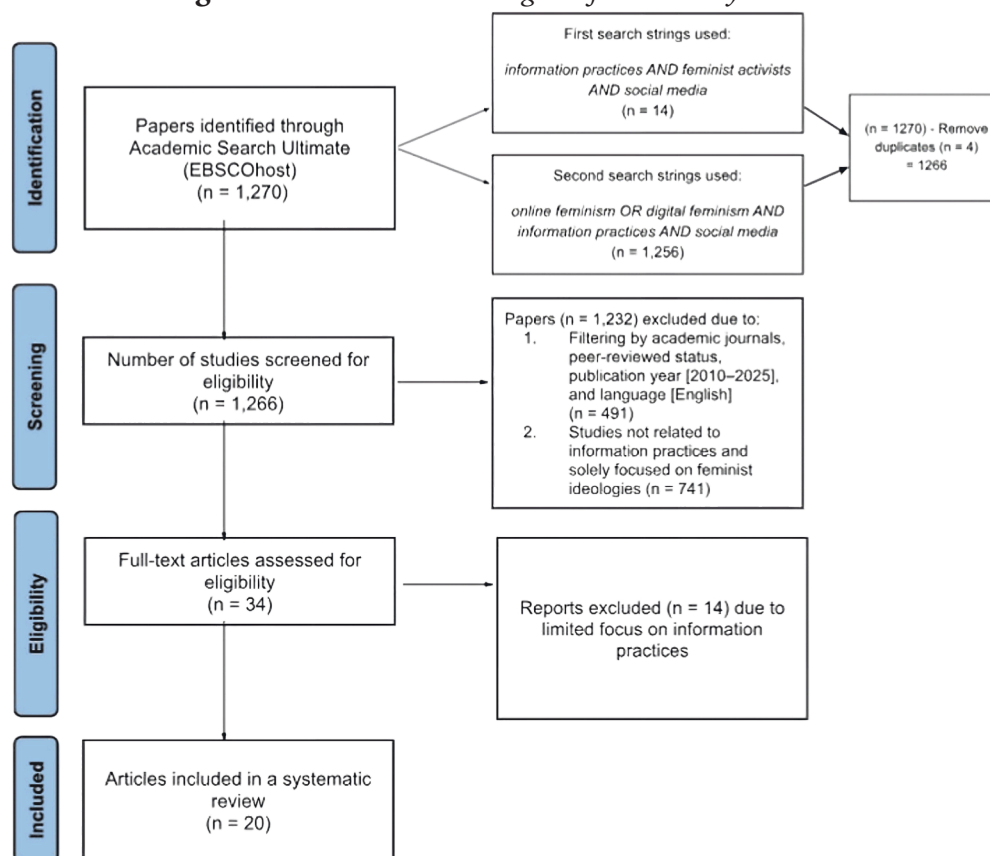
RQ1: What are the information practices (such as seeking, managing, and sharing) of feminist activists on social media platforms?

RQ2: How do feminist activists use social media as a tool for activism and movement-building?

METHODS

The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 framework was employed in conducting this systematic literature review. The PRISMA method provided a structured approach for identifying, screening, and selecting relevant literature in a transparent and replicable manner. It guided the formulation of inclusion and exclusion criteria, the systematic search of databases, and the documentation of the selection process through a flow diagram. This ensured that the review maintained methodological rigor and minimized potential biases in the selection of studies related to the information practices of feminist activists on social media.

Figure 1. *PRISMA Flow Diagram for the Study*



Resources

Academic Search Ultimate (via EBSCOhost) was used as the primary database for this review. The search used a combination of Boolean operators and targeted keywords related to information practices, feminism, and social media. Zotero was used as a reference manager to store, tag, and screen all retrieved articles.

The Systematic Review Process for Article Selection

Identification. Initial search strings included terms such as “*information practices AND feminist activists AND social media*” and “*online feminism OR digital feminism AND information practices AND social media*”. This yielded a combined total of 1,270 results (14 from the first search string and 1,256 from the second). After removing 4 duplicates, 1,266 articles remained for initial screening.

Screening. During the screening phase, 1,266 papers were evaluated. Articles were included if they were focused on feminist activism, discussed information practices such as seeking, sharing, organizing, or verifying information, examined social media platforms (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok), were written in English, were peer-reviewed journal articles, and were published from 2010 onwards. Specifically, the year 2010 was chosen as the cutoff because it corresponds to the period in which social media platforms became sufficiently widespread for feminist activists to use them as primary tools for organizing and communication, making it a meaningful starting point for examining digital information practices. On the other hand, articles were excluded if they were not related to feminist activism, focused solely on feminist ideologies or history without addressing information practices, were written in non-English languages, were blogs, editorials, opinion pieces, or non-peer-reviewed articles, or were published before 2010. Non-English studies were excluded not because of their irrelevance, but due to the researcher’s language limitations to ensure all studies were read and interpreted directly without the added variability of translation.

Eligibility. For the eligibility phase, 34 full-text papers were assessed, and 14 were excluded due to limited focus on information practices, resulting in 20 papers included in the final review.

Data Extraction and Synthesis for SLR

A structured data extraction sheet was created using Google Sheets. For each of the included articles, the following fields were extracted: citation, year, research

aim, methodology, participants, social media platform(s) discussed, types of information practices studied (such as seeking, sharing, organizing, etc.), and key findings. After extraction, a thematic synthesis was conducted. The studies were grouped according to recurring patterns in their findings and analyzed to address the research questions. This synthesis yielded seven thematic dimensions of information sharing, which emerged as the core information practice across all reviewed literature: mobilization and organizing, framing and resistance, storytelling and visibility, emotional and affective labor, disruption and activist tactics, education and awareness, and debate and argumentation. These themes were then analyzed to highlight consistencies and tensions across the literature.

LIMITATIONS

This review is based on the thematic analysis of 20 peer-reviewed studies selected through a systematic process. While it offers valuable insights, the findings are shaped by the researcher’s interpretation and limited by the scope of the included literature. As the screening and eligibility assessment were conducted only by a single researcher, the selection process relied on individual judgment and was susceptible to subjective interpretation, especially in determining whether a study sufficiently addressed information practices.

Beyond this, the review is also limited in its geographic and platform coverage. Most studies were conducted in Asia and the Americas, with minimal representation from the Global South, particularly Africa. In terms of platforms, Twitter and Facebook were more commonly examined than newer or region-specific platforms. There also remains limited exploration of other information practices, such as information seeking, organizing, and verifying, which are equally crucial in sustaining activism. These gaps suggest the need for future research that investigates the full spectrum of information behaviors feminist activists engage in online, explores a broader range of digital contexts, includes more diverse feminist voices, and examines how these practices evolve across different cultures, technologies, and political environments.

RESULTS

This section presents the results of the systematic review, drawing from a final set of 20 studies selected based on the PRISMA framework. Table 1 provides an overview of these studies, summarizing key characteristics such as their authors, publication year, study location, methodology, participants, platforms examined, and the core information practices explored. To provide

additional context and highlight broader patterns, a series of charts is included. Specifically, these visualizations show the distribution of studies by publication year, continent, methodology used, and social media platforms studied. Together, these results

offer a foundational view of where, when, and how feminist activists' information practices on social media have been examined, setting the stage for the synthesis presented in Table 2, which outlines the major thematic categories identified across the included studies.

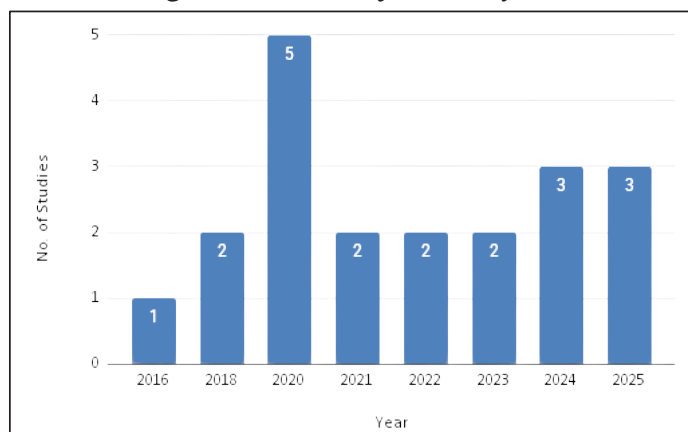
Table 1. *Overview of Included Studies (Chronologically Arranged)*

Author(s)	Study Location	Methodology	Participants	Platform(s)	Key Information Practices
Drücke & Zobl (2016)	Germany, Austria, Switzerland	Quantitative and qualitative content analysis	Users of #aufschrei hashtag	Twitter, feminist blogs	Argumentation patterns, networking practices
Brimacombe et al. (2018)	Fiji	Semi-structured group discussions	Women's rights activists	Facebook, Twitter, blogs	Information dissemination, debate, policy influence
Jackson (2018)	New Zealand	Qualitative analysis	Teenage female feminists	Facebook, Tumblr	Knowledge sharing, connecting with feminism
Dey (2020)	India	Netnography, Qualitative interviews	Digital activists	Facebook, Twitter, blogs	Information sharing, organizing, mobilizing
Hou (2020)	China	Ethnographic observation, interviews	Chinese feminists	Weibo	Consciousness raising, coalition forming
Linabary et al. (2020)	United States	Analysis of 51,577 tweets, interviews	#WhyIStayed participants	Twitter	Voice, multivocality, visibility
Storer & Rodriguez (2020)	United States	Qualitative analysis of Twitter data	#WhyIStayed participants	Twitter, Facebook	Framing, contesting dominant narratives
Voina et al. (2020)	Romania	Explorative study	#MeToo storytellers	Facebook	Storytelling, solidarity networks, collective response
Clark-Parsons (2021)	United States	Analysis of meta-tweets	#MeToo participants	Twitter	Making personal political through visibility
Errázuriz (2021)	Chile	Digital Ethnography, narrative analysis	Chilean High school students	Facebook	Information sharing, collective identity formation
Reverter & Medina-Vicent (2022)	Spain	Qualitative analysis	8M feminist strike participants	Twitter	Communication, mobilization
Roth-Cohen (2022)	Israel	Virtual ethnography, interviews	Feminist group members	Facebook	Messaging, affective mediation
Caldeira & Machado (2023)	Portugal	Observation, news analysis	#VermelhoEmBelem participants	Twitter, Instagram	Self-representation, symbolic resistance
Rovira-Sancho (2023)	Mexico	Digital ethnography, traditional ethnography	Mexican #MeToo organizers	Twitter	Affective labor, community building, handling backlash
Diez & Bossio (2024)	Peru	Content analysis, interviews	Feminist Facebook group members	Facebook	Sharing, debating, denouncing, organizing, helping
Sigurdardottir et al. (2024)	Iran	Netnography of 107 videos	Iranian women, TikTok users	TikTok	Persuasion through embodied performances
Wang & Chang (2024)	China	Semi-structured interviews	42 Chinese women	Weibo	Information sharing, discursive resistance
Caldeira et al. (2025)	Portugal	In-depth interviews	Online feminism participants	Twitter, Facebook	Digital engagement, disconnection practices
Fredenburg (2025)	United States	Critical discourse analysis	"Camping" code users	Twitter	Coded communication, symbolic activism
Wang & Whyke (2025)	China	Thematic and discourse analysis	Sexual harassment case users	Douban, Weibo	Justice-seeking, corroborating allegations

Distribution of Studies by Year

Figure 2 displays the number of included studies published between 2016 and 2025. While early years (2010-2015) show limited academic output on the topic, there is a sharp increase in publications beginning around 2020, likely influenced by the global visibility of feminist digital campaigns such as #MeToo and #WhyIStayed (Linabary et al., 2020; Voina et al., 2020). The surge in recent years (especially 2023-2025) highlights growing scholarly interest in the information practices of feminist activists on social media. However, it is important to acknowledge that this chart reflects only the studies included in this review, which range from 2016 to 2025, and does not account for unpublished or grey literature.

Figure 2. *Number of Studies by Year*

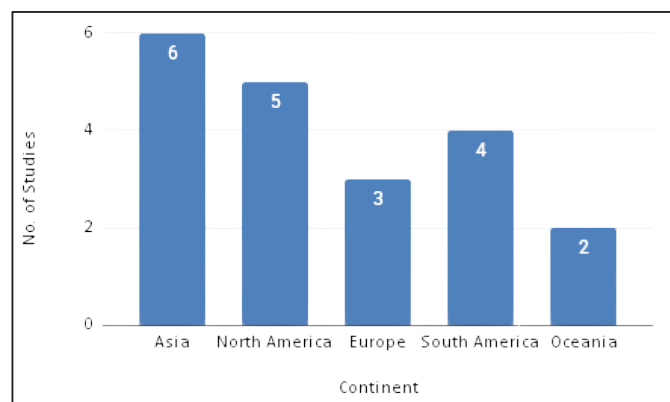


Geographical Distribution

Figure 3 illustrates the geographic distribution of the 20 included studies, categorized by continent. The data reflect only the locations of the studies included in this review, based on the authors' research settings or participant origins. Asia accounts for the largest number of studies ($n = 6$), followed by North America ($n = 5$), South America ($n = 4$), while Europe ($n = 3$) and Oceania ($n = 2$) are less represented. Notably, Africa is unrepresented in the final set of included studies, and the Middle East appears only through individual countries (Iran and Israel, both counted under Asia). It is important to note that these figures do not necessarily reflect the global distribution of feminist activism itself, but rather where academic research on digital information practices has been most concentrated and

published, at least for this review.

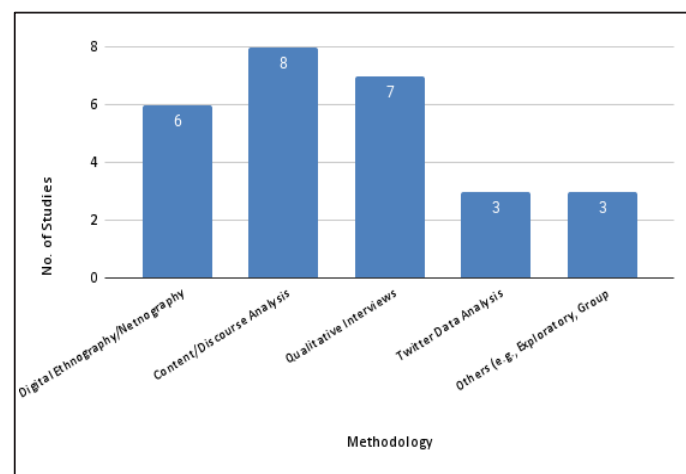
Figure 3. *Number of Studies by Continent*



Methodology

Figure 4 presents the distribution of methodologies used across the 20 included studies, with several studies employing multiple methodological approaches. The most commonly employed approach was content and discourse analysis ($n = 8$), followed by qualitative interviews ($n = 7$) and digital ethnography/netnography ($n = 6$), highlighting the dominance of qualitative and interpretive methods in examining digital feminist activism. Twitter data analysis appeared in a smaller number of studies ($n = 3$), focusing on large-scale datasets and hashtag-based movements. Additionally, several studies utilized other approaches ($n = 3$), including exploratory research, group discussions, and observational methods. This distribution underscores the methodological diversity and the value of mixed-method approaches in understanding complex digital information practices.

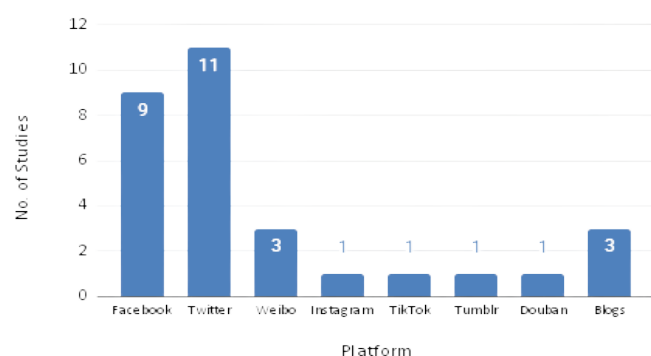
Figure 4. *Number of Studies by Methodology*



Platforms

Figure 5 illustrates the distribution of social media platforms used across the 20 included studies. Twitter was the most frequently studied platform, appearing in 11 studies, often analyzed for its role in hashtag activism and public discourse. Facebook followed closely, appearing in 9 studies and frequently used in the context of community organizing and group-based activism. Weibo, a Chinese social media platform, appeared in 3 studies, reflecting regional variations in digital activism. Other platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Tumblr, and Douban were each mentioned in 1 study, while blogs appeared in 3 studies. This distribution highlights Twitter and Facebook as dominant spaces for studying feminist activists' information practices in this review, while also acknowledging emerging and regional platforms.

Figure 5. Number of Studies by Platform



Information Practices

Information sharing was identified as the core practice in feminist digital activism across all reviewed studies. Table 2 presents the seven main dimensions through which this sharing occurs, highlighting the diversity of strategies and purposes that shape how feminist activists use social media to engage, educate, and resist.

Mobilization and organizing show how activists use digital platforms to coordinate protests, build coalitions, and foster collective identities. For example, Reverter and Medina-Vicent (2022) found that Spanish feminists used Twitter as a central organizing tool during the 8M feminist strike, coordinating logistics and amplifying the movement's reach beyond physical spaces.

Framing and resistance reflect efforts to challenge dominant narratives, promote discursive resistance, and reshape public discourse through symbolic action. Storer and Rodriguez (2020), for instance, show how #WhyIStayed participants used Twitter to reframe

intimate partner violence away from victim-blaming and toward the systemic conditions that trap survivors.

Storytelling and visibility capture the use of personal narratives, multivocal expression, and self-representation to foster solidarity and amplify lived experiences. Voina et al. (2020) observed how Romanian #MeToo participants used Facebook to share personal stories, creating networks of solidarity and making gendered violence more publicly visible.

Emotional and affective labor emphasizes the creation of supportive spaces, emotional regulation, and strategies to prevent burnout among activists. Rovira-Sancho (2023) found that Mexican #MeToo organizers actively moderated online spaces and provided emotional support to survivors, recognizing care work as integral to sustaining the movement.

Disruption and activist tactics include creative methods such as coded communication, platform adaptation, and exposing injustice to subvert censorship and institutional silence. Fredenburg (2025), for example, documented how U.S. activists adopted coded language such as “camping” on Twitter to discuss abortion access safely following the overturning of Roe v. Wade.

Education and awareness highlight how feminist knowledge is translated into accessible language through informal teaching and relatable examples. Jackson (2018) found that teenage feminists in New Zealand used Tumblr to explain concepts like patriarchy and consent through memes and personal reflections, reaching peers with little exposure to formal feminist discourse.

Debate and argumentation involve the use of structured discourse, evidence, and counter-narratives in advocating for feminist claims and responding to opposition. For instance, Wang and Chang (2024) found that Chinese women used Weibo to publicly challenge the social norm of children taking their father's surname, engaging in sustained discursive resistance against deeply entrenched patriarchal traditions and responding to those who opposed their claims.

Together, these dimensions underscore how information sharing in feminist digital activism is not a single act, but a multifaceted set of practices that combine emotional care, political critique, tactical adaptation, and community-building across social media platforms.

Table 2. *Seven Dimensions of Information Sharing Practices in Feminist Digital Activism*

Category	Description	Studies (Citations)
Mobilization & Organizing	Using social media to coordinate protests, build coalitions, and mobilize support	Brimacombe et al. (2018); Caldeira & Machado (2023); Clark-Parsons (2021); Dey (2020); Errázuriz (2021); Linabary et al. (2020); Reverter & Medina-Vicent (2022); Rovira-Sancho (2023); Storer & Rodriguez (2020); Voina et al. (2020)
Framing & Resistance	Reframing dominant narratives to promote feminist perspectives	Caldeira & Machado (2023); Clark-Parsons (2021); Dey (2020); Drüeke & Zobl (2016); Fredenburg (2025); Hou (2020); Roth-Cohen (2022); Sigurdardottir et al. (2024); Storer & Rodriguez (2020); Wang & Chang (2024)
Storytelling & Visibility	Sharing personal experiences to raise awareness and foster solidarity	Caldeira & Machado (2023); Clark-Parsons (2021); Dey (2020); Errázuriz (2021); Linabary et al. (2020); Roth-Cohen (2022); Rovira-Sancho (2023); Storer & Rodriguez (2020); Voina et al. (2020)
Emotional/Affective Labor	Creating supportive spaces and managing the emotional impacts of activism	Caldeira et al. (2025); Clark-Parsons (2021); Diez & Bossio (2024); Linabary et al. (2020); Roth-Cohen (2022); Rovira-Sancho (2023); Sigurdardottir et al. (2024); Voina et al. (2020); Wang & Whyke (2025)
Disruption & Activist Tactics	Strategically bypassing censorship and institutional silence	Caldeira et al. (2025); Dey (2020); Drüeke & Zobl (2016); Fredenburg (2025); Hou (2020); Jackson (2018); Reverter & Medina-Vicent (2022); Sigurdardottir et al. (2024); Wang & Whyke (2025)
Education & Awareness	Translating feminist theory into accessible content	Brimacombe et al. (2018); Diez & Bossio (2024); Errázuriz (2021); Hou (2020); Jackson (2018); Roth-Cohen (2022); Storer & Rodriguez (2020); Wang & Chang (2024)
Debate & Argumentation	Engaging in dialogue, countering backlash, and persuading public opinion	Brimacombe et al. (2018); Dey (2020); Diez & Bossio (2024); Drüeke & Zobl (2016); Reverter & Medina-Vicent (2022); Sigurdardottir et al. (2024); Voina et al. (2020); Wang & Chang (2024); Wang & Whyke (2025)

DISCUSSION

This review synthesized 20 studies published between 2016 and 2025, revealing how feminist activists across different regions and platforms engage in digital activism. Most studies focused on Asia, the Americas, and Europe, with Twitter and Facebook emerging as the most commonly studied platforms. The predominance of qualitative methods, like interviews, netnography, and content/discourse analysis, underscores the importance of contextual, experience-based insights.

These patterns frame seven key themes, all understood as distinct dimensions of information sharing, which is identified as the core practice observed across all studies.

Activists' information practices are shaped not only by their goals but also by the social, political, and technological contexts they navigate. What follows is a synthesis of these dimensions, illustrating how feminist activists use social media to inform, organize, resist, and connect.

Mobilization & Organizing

Social media plays an essential role in helping activists plan protests, coordinate events, and build collective identities. In Spain, digital tools were central to organizing the 8M feminist strike (Reverter & Medina-Vicent, 2022), while in Portugal, activists spread campaigns like #VermelhoEmBelem across both Twitter

and Instagram (Caldeira & Machado, 2023). In contexts like India and Chile, social media platforms also enabled grassroots organizing outside formal activist spaces (Dey, 2020; Errázuriz, 2021).

Framing & Resistance

Activists use framing to shift public narratives and expose structural inequalities. For instance, the #WhyIStayed campaign reframed domestic violence to emphasize systemic patterns over victim-blaming (Storer & Rodriguez, 2020). Others adapted global feminist discourse to fit local contexts, like Chinese activists redefining personal struggles as political (Hou, 2020) or Israeli feminists blending #MeToo with national cultural cues (Roth-Cohen, 2022). Even video-sharing platforms like TikTok became tools for protest in restrictive countries like Iran (Sigurdardottir, Imani, & Edalati, 2024).

Storytelling & Visibility

Sharing personal stories online helps foster solidarity and bring attention to systemic issues. Movements like #MeToo and #WhyIStayed allowed survivors to publicly share their experiences, creating a sense of community and making patterns of abuse more visible (Linabary, Corple, & Cooky, 2020; Voina, Payelea, & Culic, 2020). Activists also carefully consider how they share these narratives, evaluating risks and adapting their approaches for protection while maintaining the power of their message (Clark-Parsons, 2021).

Emotional & Affective Labor

Feminist digital activism often includes emotional care and setting healthy boundaries. Activists moderate content and use trigger warnings to make their online spaces safer for users (Rovira-Sancho, 2023), cultivate a sense of solidarity through everyday acts of support (Diez & Bossio, 2024), and cope with emotional fatigue by taking planned breaks from online engagement (Caldeira, Jorge, & Kubrusly, 2025). This emotional labor is not just supportive; it is essential to sustaining their activism.

Disruption & Activist Tactics

Activists develop creative strategies to bypass censorship and institutional silence. In the U.S., they used euphemisms like “camping” to discuss abortion safely after Roe v. Wade was overturned (Fredenburg, 2025). In China, digital feminists publicly documented sexual harassment cases to hold perpetrators accountable (Wang & Whyke, 2025). Others adjusted their messaging based on platform strengths, using Twitter for fast-paced updates and blogs or videos for more

reflective storytelling (Drüeke & Zobl, 2016; Jackson, 2018).

Education & Awareness

Feminist activists often act as digital educators by making complex feminist ideas more understandable and relatable. For example, Jackson (2018) showed how teenage feminists in New Zealand used Tumblr to discuss concepts like patriarchy and consent through memes and personal reflections. Diez and Bossio (2024) observed Peruvian Facebook group members translating feminist theory into local language and real-life stories, making it easier for others to grasp. Similarly, Hou (2020) found that Chinese feminists adapted abstract terms like ‘the personal is political’ by linking them to everyday gendered experiences on Weibo. This educational work is especially vital in spaces where formal gender studies education is inaccessible.

Debate & Argumentation

Feminist activists use structured debate to make their arguments heard, confront opposition, and promote their causes. For instance, activists in Fiji engaged in policy discussions online to influence public opinion on gender issues (Brimacombe et al., 2018). Romanian feminists involved in the #MeToo movement countered online backlash by uniting around shared narratives and responding collectively (Voina, Payelea, & Culic, 2020). In China and Iran, activists used emotionally charged stories and data-driven posts on platforms like Weibo and TikTok to challenge societal norms and make persuasive feminist claims (Wang & Chang, 2024; Sigurdardottir, Imani & Edalati, 2024).

CONCLUSION

Overall, the reviewed studies demonstrate that feminist information practices on social media are multifaceted, creative, and deeply strategic. Drawing from 20 peer-reviewed studies published between 2016 and 2025, this review reveals how social media has become a critical site for feminist knowledge production, circulation, and resistance. Among these, information sharing emerged as the most prominent and frequently observed information practice, highlighting the central role of spreading messages and amplifying feminist discourse online. Through thematic synthesis, seven dimensions of information sharing emerged: mobilization and organizing, framing and resistance, storytelling and visibility, emotional and affective labor, disruption and activist tactics, education and awareness, and debate and argumentation. Activists adapt to platform constraints, merge personal stories with political goals, balance visibility with safety, and center emotion in their digital

work, illustrating that feminist activism is not a uniform phenomenon, but a rich, adaptive, and deeply strategic set of practices shaped by geography, platform, culture, and political conditions.

However, other important information practices, such as information seeking, organizing, and verifying, remain underexplored in the current literature. The review is also limited by its geographic concentration in Asia and the Americas, its focus on dominant platforms like Twitter and Facebook, and the fact that screening and selection were carried out by a single researcher, which introduces the possibility of subjective bias in the inclusion of studies.

These gaps point to clear directions for future research. Studies covering a broader range of regions, particularly the Global South, and a wider variety of platforms would offer a more complete picture of how feminist activists engage with information online. More expansive literature searches and screening processes involving multiple reviewers would also strengthen the objectivity, comprehensiveness, and accuracy of future reviews. Nevertheless, the evolving information practices identified in this review still reflect how feminism continues to adapt within digital cultures, shaped by the tools available, the contexts activists operate in, and the communities they build. As feminist activism continues to evolve alongside digital cultures, understanding these practices in their full complexity remains essential, not just as an academic exercise, but as a contribution to the broader project of making feminist movements more visible, resilient, and inclusive.

DECLARATION ON AI USAGE

Claude.ai (Anthropic) was used during the preparation of this manuscript to assist in organizing and synthesizing information gathered through Zotero, particularly in structuring the data extraction process and thematic synthesis. The author reviewed, verified, and took full responsibility for all content, analysis, and conclusions presented in this review. Generative AI was not used as a substitute for the author's own judgment, knowledge, and critical thinking.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTEREST

The author declares no potential conflicts of interest with respect to research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

DECLARATION ON SOURCE OF FUNDING

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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	The PhJLIS is published by the School of Library and Information Studies, University of the Philippines Diliman. ISSN 2719-0471 (Online)

Open Relationships, Open Minds: Information Experiences of Individuals in Open Relationships

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Abstract

The visibility and acceptance of diverse relationship structures, particularly open relationships within consensual non-monogamy (CNM), have increased in recent years. Despite this shift, CNM remains under-researched and continues to face distinct social, emotional, and logistical challenges. This study explores the information experiences of individuals in open relationships in the Philippines, focusing on how they seek, share, and manage information, and how it influences their life decisions. Using a multi-method ethnographic approach, including semi-structured interviews and netnographic observations from Reddit, the study identifies four key themes: information needs, resources, challenges, and information management practices. The findings underscore the importance of contextualized, accessible information in addressing these challenges and supporting individuals in CNM relationships. The study highlights the need to consider broader social, cultural, and structural factors in designing inclusive support systems, and emphasizes the value of fostering open dialogue and nonjudgmental spaces.

Keywords: Open relationships; Consensual non-monogamy; Information experiences; Ethnographic research

INTRODUCTION

Rapid shifts in information access and communication have significantly transformed how individuals engage with previously taboo topics. This democratization of information has increased the visibility and normalization of once-stigmatized relationship models, including open relationships. Open relationships refer to consensual non-monogamous arrangements in which partners mutually agree to allow romantic or sexual involvement with others outside their primary partnership (Séguin et al., 2017).

The growing visibility of these relationship models, particularly in urban and online spaces, has sparked the researcher's interest in examining their historical emergence, cultural development, and patterns of public awareness. In the Philippine context—a predominantly conservative society—questions remain about the origins and local emergence of open relationships, the uneven distribution of information about these

relationship models, and the factors influencing varying levels of awareness and familiarity among individuals.

Despite increasing public discourse, academic scholarship on open relationships from an information studies perspective remains limited. Existing research has predominantly examined the psychological, relational, and sociological dimensions of consensual non-monogamy, with comparatively little attention given to how individuals in such relationships seek, share, evaluate, and manage information in their daily lives.

Addressing this gap, the present study explores the information experiences of individuals in open relationships, focusing on how they seek, share, and manage information related to their relational practices and decision-making. By examining these experiences within the context of the Philippines, this study contributes to the limited body of literature on the information practices of individuals in consensual non-

monogamous relationships. It promotes a broader scholarly understanding of marginalized relationship experiences.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A comprehensive understanding of open relationships requires examination through historical, cultural, psychological, and sociological perspectives. These lenses provide insight into the emergence of consensual non-monogamous relationship structures, their varying social perceptions, and the personal and societal factors influencing their practice.

Conceptualizing Open Relationships and Consensual Non-Monogamy

Open relationships are situated within the broader framework of consensual non-monogamy (CNM), which refers to relational arrangements in which individuals engage in sexual, emotional, or romantic relationships with multiple partners with the awareness and consent of all involved parties (Conley et al., 2013, as cited in Astle et al., 2024). Within CNM, three commonly recognized categories are polyamory, open relationships, and swinging. Polyamory refers to relationship arrangements in which individuals consensually engage in multiple emotional, romantic, or sexual relationships (Moors et al., 2021; Rubel & Bogaert, 2015, as cited in Astle et al., 2024). Swinging typically involves committed partners jointly engaging in sexual activities with others, often through partner swapping or group sexual encounters. In contrast, open relationships generally permit one or both partners to engage in sexual relationships outside the primary partnership while maintaining romantic exclusivity within the central relationship (Conley et al., 2017; Rubel & Bogaert, 2015, as cited in Astle et al., 2024).

These distinctions highlight that differences among CNM configurations primarily arise from the specific relational agreements participants establish. However, recent scholarship suggests that existing categorizations do not fully capture the diversity of consensually non-monogamous arrangements, with emerging classifications such as mixed relationships and hybrid relational structures further expanding the conceptual landscape of CNM (Astle et al., 2024).

Demographic Patterns in Consensual Non-Monogamy

Research suggests that individuals engaged in CNM relationships exhibit demographic patterns that differ from those in monogamous relationships. Studies have found that people in polyamorous and other consensually non-monogamous relationships are more

likely to identify as bisexual, pansexual, or with other non-heteronormative sexual orientations (Balzarini et al., 2018). Prior research has also documented a relatively high prevalence of consensual non-monogamy among gay men, particularly in the form of open relationships and swinging arrangements (Barker & Langdridge, 2010, as cited in Balzarini et al., 2018). These findings suggest that non-monogamous relationship structures may intersect with broader patterns of sexual identity exploration and fluidity.

Religious affiliation likewise appears to vary between monogamous and consensually non-monogamous populations, with individuals in CNM relationships less likely to identify as Christian compared to those in monogamous partnerships (Balzarini et al., 2018). Collectively, these demographic differences indicate that participation in CNM may be associated with broader openness to alternative social and relational norms.

Motivations for Engaging in Open Relationships

Existing studies identify multiple motivations for engaging in consensually non-monogamous relationships. Individuals may pursue CNM arrangements to meet diverse emotional and sexual needs that they perceive cannot be fulfilled within a single-partner structure. Research suggests that CNM participants often report greater openness toward casual sexual experiences, increased opportunities for personal growth, and the ability to form multiple meaningful relational bonds (Rodrigues, 2024). Furthermore, studies indicate that individuals transitioning into non-monogamous relationship structures may experience increased sexual satisfaction over time, alongside high levels of relational commitment and overall life satisfaction (Rodrigues, 2024). These findings challenge common assumptions that non-monogamy is inherently associated with relational instability or dissatisfaction.

Historical Emergence of Open Relationships

The historical development of open relationships is closely linked to broader social transformations surrounding sexuality and relational norms. Scholars trace the emergence of consensual non-monogamy in contemporary Western discourse to the sexual revolution of the twentieth century, which challenged traditional Victorian values surrounding marriage, sexuality, and gender roles (Sprague, 2019). During the Victorian era, dominant social norms promoted female chastity and marital monogamy while simultaneously tolerating sexual double standards for men. However, social reform movements beginning in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries increasingly contested these norms, advocating for women's rights,

sexual liberation, and alternative family structures (Williams, 2002, as cited in Sprague, 2019).

These ideological shifts intensified through the World Wars and the broader social movements of the 1960s, which further normalized public discourse surrounding sexuality and non-traditional relationships (Sprague, 2019). Within this context, alternative relationship models—including open relationships—gained greater visibility and legitimacy.

A pivotal moment in the popularization of open relationships came with the publication of *Open Marriage* by Nena and George O'Neill, released in 1972, which introduced the concept of non-exclusive intimate partnerships to mainstream audiences and framed such arrangements as viable alternatives to traditional monogamy (O'Neill & O'Neill, 1972b). The publication contributed significantly to public discourse by increasing awareness and legitimizing conversations surrounding alternative relational structures.

Information Dissemination and Awareness of Open Relationships

The historical and contemporary visibility of open relationships underscores the role of information dissemination in shaping awareness and public understanding of non-traditional relationship models. Publications, media representations, and digital platforms have served as key channels for circulating, contesting, and normalizing knowledge of open relationships. However, access to such information remains uneven, particularly within culturally conservative societies where discussions of sexuality and non-monogamy may remain stigmatized or suppressed.

Despite increasing public awareness of open relationships, research examining how individuals access, interpret, and utilize information related to consensual non-monogamy remains limited. Existing scholarship has largely focused on the psychological, relational, and demographic dimensions of CNM, with comparatively little attention devoted to the information practices of individuals engaged in these relationships. This gap is particularly evident in the Philippine context, where traditional cultural and religious values may shape both information accessibility and the social acceptability of alternative relationship models.

Accordingly, further examination of the information experiences of individuals in open relationships is necessary to understand how awareness, knowledge acquisition, and information-sharing practices influence the formation, maintenance, and social navigation of

consensually non-monogamous relationships.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded in Bruce et al.'s (2014) Information Experience Theory, which conceptualizes information experience as the complex ways individuals engage with, interpret, and use information in everyday life. Rather than focusing solely on information-seeking behaviors, the framework emphasizes how individuals make meaning from information through their lived experiences and interactions with diverse informational environments.

Information Experience Theory is particularly relevant to this study because it enables examination of how individuals in open relationships engage with information related to their relational practices, interpret available discourses surrounding consensual non-monogamy, and construct meaning from these interactions in ways that influence their attitudes and decisions.

The study also draws on the concept of informed learning, which situates learning at the intersection of information use and reflective engagement (Hughes, 2014).

The discussion underscores that informed learning exists at the intersection of information and learning experiences, integrating the two through reflection and continuous engagement with information. According to Hughes (2014), informed learning focuses on how individuals experience learning through their use of information and is particularly useful for examining learning processes in everyday contexts.

As illustrated in Figure 2, information experiences are embedded within social and relational contexts and lead to informed learning, transformation, and ongoing meaning-making that reshape participants' understanding of open relationships. Through this lens, participants' encounters with information about open relationships are understood not merely as acts of information acquisition, but as socially situated experiences through which learning shapes their understanding, relational perspectives, and meanings.

Together, these frameworks provide a lens for examining the information experiences of individuals in open relationships, particularly in culturally conservative contexts where social context, relational dynamics, stigma, and limited public discourse shape access to and interpretation of relationship-related information

Figure 1. *Informed Learning: Intersection of information use and learning experiences (Hughes, 2014).*

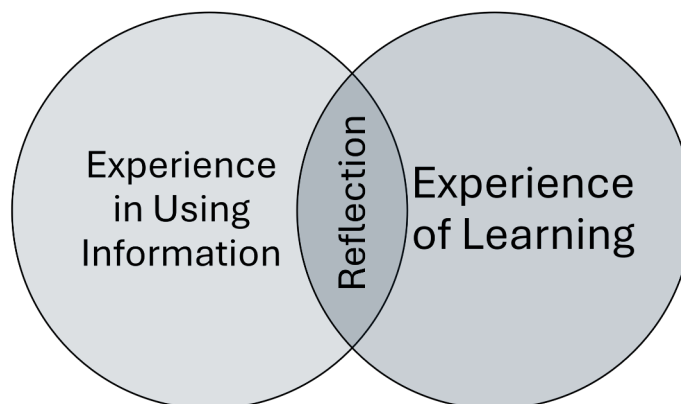
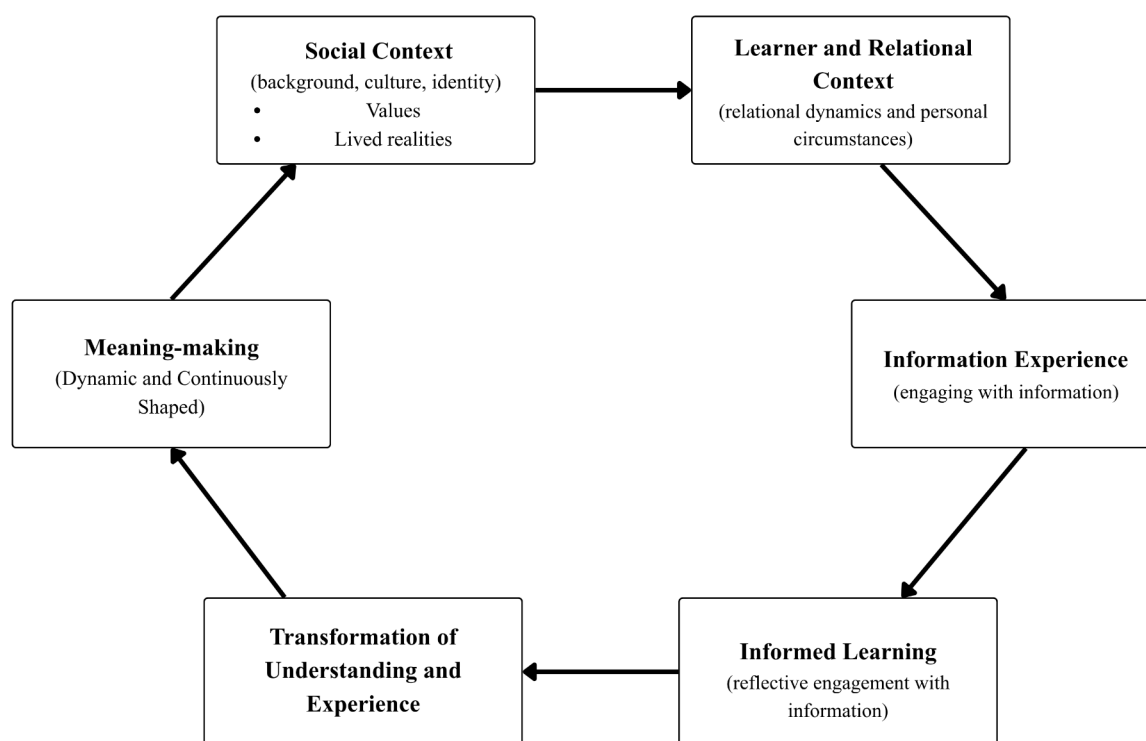


Figure 2. *Framework for Understanding Information Experience in Social and Relational Contexts*



METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design combining interviews and ethnographic methods to explore lived experiences in context. In particular, it draws on the mixed-method approach of Pool et al. (2010), which, in the context of HIV microbicide trials, demonstrates how integrating interview and ethnographic data enhances the interpretation of sensitive self-reported accounts by identifying inconsistencies and situating participants' responses within broader social contexts.

Given the sensitive and stigmatized nature of consensual non-monogamy (CNM), participants often engage with online communities for information, support, and interaction. For this reason, the study extends ethnography into netnography (Kozinets, 2010), which enables the systematic analysis of naturally occurring online discourse alongside interview data. Kozinets (2010) conceptualizes netnography as an approach that recognizes how contemporary interactions with information and communication technologies are embedded in everyday social life.

This study also draws methodological insight from Godbold (2012), whose netnographic research adopts an ethnomethodological perspective to examine how individuals construct shared understandings of “normality” within online health communities. Rather than focusing solely on cultural description, her work emphasizes meaning as actively produced through interaction. Similarly, the present study examines how individuals in open relationships make sense of their experiences through engagement with online discussions, particularly in contexts where consensual non-monogamy remains socially contested.

Together, these methods provide a more comprehensive understanding of both participants’ lived narratives and their digital information practices.

Participants and Sampling

Purposive sampling was employed to recruit individuals with direct experience in open relationships, based on criteria aligned with the study’s objectives. Because of the sensitive nature of the topic, snowball sampling was also used. This recruitment method involves existing participants or mutual contacts identifying and referring individuals who meet the study criteria. In this study, a mutual contact helped establish initial access to one participant. According to Browne (2005), snowball sampling is particularly appropriate for studies involving hidden or hard-to-reach populations, especially when the topic is sensitive or the number of potential participants is limited.

Two individuals were selected based on the following criteria: (1) at least 18 years of age, (2) current or recent involvement in an open relationship within the past two years, and (3) a minimum of six months’ experience in such arrangements. They were also required to demonstrate willingness to discuss their experiences and engagement with online communities related to open relationships.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and netnographic observation. Interviews were guided by open-ended questions exploring how participants navigate open relationships, including the types of information they seek, the sources and communities they rely on, and their practices of privacy and disclosure. Participants were also encouraged to reflect on challenges encountered in seeking and sharing information within broader social and cultural contexts, as well as the personal and relational implications of these experiences. Interviews were conducted with informed consent and audio-recorded for transcription

and analysis.

For the netnographic component, publicly accessible discussions from Reddit were used, selected because the platform actively engages with topics on open relationships. Threads were included if they contained at least five responses and were posted within the past three years. Data focused on how individuals articulate information needs, share experiences, and negotiate meaning within online environments.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) open coding approach. To enhance analytical rigor, method triangulation was employed by integrating interview data with netnographic data from Reddit, as well as relevant published and unpublished materials on open relationships. This enabled a more comprehensive and contextually grounded interpretation of participants’ information experiences. Consistent with Pool et al. (2010), triangulation in qualitative research strengthens interpretation by drawing on multiple contextual sources of evidence. Convergence across data sources is therefore understood as enhancing analytical depth and interpretive richness.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical protocols were strictly observed throughout the study. Interview participants provided informed consent and were assured of confidentiality; pseudonyms were used in reporting. Participation was voluntary, and individuals were free to withdraw at any stage.

For netnographic data, only publicly available content was analyzed. User identities were anonymized, and care was taken to avoid including identifiable information and to minimize the risk of reverse identification. Where necessary, content was paraphrased to further protect user privacy, particularly given the sensitive nature of discussions surrounding open relationships.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data from interviews and from netnography were analyzed thematically, with findings organized into key themes reflecting participants’ information needs, practices, and challenges.

Two participants contributed in-depth insights based on their experiences in open relationships. Participant 1 had approximately six months of experience and was initially introduced to the concept through academic and media sources, which prompted further exploration and mutual agreement with a partner. Participant 2

became aware of open relationships earlier through social and community exposure, particularly within LGBTQIA+ spaces, and later transitioned from a long-term monogamous relationship to a consensually non-monogamous arrangement. Both participants emphasized the role of information, communication, and negotiated boundaries in shaping their experiences.

To complement the interview data, netnographic observations were conducted on Reddit, a platform participants identified as a key source of information and community engagement. Two communities—Swingers Philippines and Alas Juicy—were selected due to their active discussions related to non-monogamous relationships. Rather than serving solely as informational spaces, these communities function as environments where individuals share experiences, seek advice, and negotiate understanding of open relationships within a semi-anonymous setting.

Integrating interview and netnographic data provided a broader perspective on how individuals navigate information related to open relationships across both personal and digital contexts.

Theme 1. Information Needs of Individuals in Open Relationships

This theme addresses the study's objective of examining the information needs of individuals in open relationships. Findings are organized into five subthemes: (1) information-seeking motivation, (2) defining open relationships and expanding perspectives through real-life examples, (3) practical guidance and strategies, (4) safety and accessibility, and (5) communities and connections. These subthemes reflect the types of information individuals seek, the contexts in which these needs emerge, and the motivations underlying their information-seeking behaviors. Collectively, they illustrate how information practices are embedded in participants' everyday experiences and decision-making processes.

Theme 1.1. Information-Seeking Motivation

The first subtheme, information-seeking motivation, highlights differing drivers behind participants' engagement with information. Participant 1 demonstrated primarily extrinsic motivations, such as curiosity and exposure to new ideas. Their interest in open relationships was initially sparked by academic discussion, prompting further exploration: *"When it started, I became curious about what a philosopher said about relationships... I read an article and did some research."* This reflects how external stimuli can initiate information-seeking and shape understanding.

In contrast, Participant 2 exhibited intrinsic motivation, grounded in personal reflection and self-awareness. As the participant explained, *"I didn't enter the relationship after researching how to do this... It's more about my internal desires."* In this case, information serves less as a starting point and more as support for pre-existing decisions.

These contrasting motivations result in different patterns of information use. While Participant 1 actively explored external sources to build understanding, Participant 2 relied on internal motivations and used information selectively to support personal choices. Despite these differences, both participants emphasized the importance of access to reliable, judgment-free information environments.

This finding aligns with Informed Learning Theory (Bruce, 2008, as cited in Bruce et al., 2014), which posits that learning occurs through meaningful engagement with information in context. As the model suggests, reflection lies at the intersection of information use and learning, where individuals transform information into insight. Through reflection, participants connect what they encounter with their values, emotions, and aspirations, enabling deeper understanding. This supports the theory's core premise: learning is a reflective and personal process shaped by how individuals use information to construct meaning, develop identity, and make informed decisions.

Theme 1.2. Defining Open Relationships, Expanding Perspectives, and Real-Life Examples

A key finding of this study is that individuals in open relationships actively construct their understanding of non-monogamy through engagement with definitions, diverse perspectives, and real-life examples. Rather than relying on fixed or institutionalized meanings, participants approach open relationships as fluid and interpretive, requiring continuous sense-making.

Participant 1's reflection on the relationship of Jean-Paul Sartre illustrates how exposure to alternative relational models can challenge dominant norms and expand conceptual frameworks. Sartre's long-term partnership, characterized by emotional commitment without adherence to traditional marriage, served as a powerful reference point. The participant's response suggests that such examples function not merely as information sources but as interpretive tools that legitimize nontraditional arrangements. By recognizing that individuals may have needs beyond a single partner while maintaining a strong primary bond, the participant reexamines conventional assumptions about exclusivity and commitment.

This highlights the role of real-life examples as experiential knowledge that bridges abstract concepts and lived realities. Participants do not passively consume information; instead, they selectively engage with narratives that resonate with their personal contexts. The emphasis on identifying “successful” open relationships further indicates a search for models that demonstrate viability, stability, and emotional coherence. In this sense, information-seeking is both evaluative and aspirational, aimed at reducing uncertainty and validating relational choices.

Insights from Reddit discussions further reinforce this process. Online threads frequently focus on defining terms, comparing forms of consensual non-monogamy (CNM), and evaluating their advantages and limitations. While labels such as swinging, polyamory, and open relationships help establish expectations, both interview and netnographic findings suggest that individuals ultimately prioritize negotiated boundaries over rigid classifications.

Personal motivations also emerge as central to shaping relational structures. Distinctions in emotional involvement, commitment, and exclusivity require ongoing negotiation, reflecting the flexible and context-dependent nature of these relationships. While open relationships in some countries are often defined primarily as sexual involvement outside the primary partnership without emotional attachment, this study reveals that, in the Philippine context, open relationships may also include emotional connections. This finding highlights a broader and more flexible understanding of open relationships, emphasizing that their meaning is shaped by cultural context, personal values, and negotiated boundaries.

Overall, these findings suggest that defining open relationships is a dynamic and reflexive process. Individuals construct meaning by integrating information, community discourse, and personal experience, continuously aligning relational practices with their values and social context.

Theme 1.3. Practical Guidance and Strategies

Another major information need centered on practical guidance for initiating and maintaining open relationships. Participants sought strategies for communicating with partners, negotiating boundaries, and navigating interactions with additional partners. Participant 2 particularly emphasized the need for actionable advice when transitioning from monogamy, including how to introduce the concept to a partner, disclose relationship status, and discuss health

precautions.

Netnographic findings reinforced these concerns, with discussions frequently emphasizing boundary-setting, communication practices, and adaptability. Participants consistently framed successful open relationships as depending on continuous dialogue, mutual respect, and personalized strategies.

Theme 1.4. Safety and Accessibility

Safety emerged as a foundational information need, particularly regarding sexual health, risk management, and access to reliable support systems. Participants identified accurate health information and accessible services such as STD testing as essential to maintaining ethical and sustainable open relationships.

Participants framed safety practices not only as protective measures but also as relational responsibilities tied to trust, accountability, and mutual care. These findings suggest that safety extends beyond prevention and functions as a core practice in maintaining transparency and informed decision-making.

Theme 1.5. Communities and Connections

The final subtheme highlights the importance of communities and networks where individuals can seek information, share experiences, and find validation. Participants emphasized that connecting with others reduced feelings of isolation and reinforced the understanding that open relationships are neither unique nor inherently abnormal.

Netnographic findings further demonstrated that online platforms functioned as spaces for community-building, anonymous exploration, and experiential exchange. These environments shaped not only access to information but also participants' perceptions, expectations, and relational understanding.

Theme 2. Trusted Information Resources

Another significant theme was the range of trusted information resources individuals relied upon to address their needs. These included digital platforms, online resources, and traditional resources. In contexts where stigma and social judgment may shape information behavior, participants often prioritized accessibility, discretion, and anonymity.

2.1 Digital Platforms as Information Sources

Findings indicate that individuals in open relationships frequently rely on digital platforms as primary information resources. These platforms provide

accessible and interactive spaces where users can obtain advice, compare experiences, and explore relationship structures in personalized ways. Their significance lies in facilitating information access, exposure to diverse perspectives, and practical decision-making.

2.1.1 Dating Applications

Dating applications serve both informational and relational functions. For some participants, these platforms provide opportunities to openly explore relationship preferences and identify others with similar relational orientations. One participant noted that platforms such as Omegle previously enabled discussions about nontraditional relationship structures in ways that felt accessible and discreet.

Other participants emphasized the practical utility of dating apps in filtering potential partners. Features on platforms such as Bumble allow users to identify individuals with compatible relationship preferences, supporting expectation-setting and informed partner selection.

2.1.2 Anonymous Platforms

Anonymity emerged as a critical feature in accessing sensitive or stigmatized information. Platforms such as Reddit provide environments where users can discuss open relationships, seek guidance, and explore perspectives without revealing their identities. This is particularly relevant in contexts where nontraditional relationships may be socially marginalized.

However, trust in anonymous platforms is not absolute. While anonymity can facilitate openness, some participants expressed concerns regarding misinformation and limited accountability. This tension highlights the dual function of anonymous platforms as accessible information spaces that also require critical evaluation.

2.2 Online Resources

Online resources emerged as a significant category of trusted information resources, particularly because of their accessibility, immediacy, and breadth. Interview findings indicate that participants primarily relied on online articles, while netnographic observations revealed that Reddit users frequently recommended podcasts. Together, these findings suggest that individuals draw on multiple forms of digital media to meet diverse informational needs, ranging from foundational knowledge to deeper relational understanding.

Online articles were identified as a primary resource for

fulfilling a broad range of information needs, including definitions, real-life examples, safety guidelines, strategies, and accessibility. Participants viewed articles as convenient and comprehensive tools for obtaining immediate information. As Participant 1 noted, “But when it comes to reading, I think most of us get our information from articles.” The prominence of online articles reflects their value as accessible and adaptable resources. This accessibility allows individuals to independently seek information on demand, making online articles particularly valuable for those navigating open relationships in contexts where formal guidance may be limited. Beyond convenience, these findings suggest that online articles function as foundational learning tools, enabling users to build conceptual understanding and practical awareness.

Podcasts were frequently recommended resources within Reddit discussions, particularly for expanding understanding, clarifying misconceptions, and exploring open relationships in greater depth. Unlike static informational sources, podcasts function as both educational and dialogic tools, encouraging reflection, shared learning, and relational communication. Recommendations such as listening with a partner suggest that podcasts support not only individual learning but also collaborative engagement with complex relationship dynamics. Their frequent circulation within Reddit discussions further highlights how online communities facilitate resource-sharing and continuous learning through curated recommendations and experiential exchange.

2.3 Traditional Resources: Books

Despite the prominence of digital resources, traditional print resources—particularly books—remain highly valued as trusted and authoritative sources of information. Both interview and Reddit findings indicate that books continue to play a significant role in shaping individuals’ understanding of open relationships.

Participants and Reddit users frequently referenced influential books such as *Open Marriage* (O’Neill & O’Neill, 1972a), *Polysecure* (Fern, 2020), *The Ethical Slut* (first edition by Easton and Liszt, 1997), and *More Than Two* (first edition by Veaux & Rickert, 2014) as valuable resources for guidance, reflection, and relational insight. These works were often framed not merely as informational texts but as transformative resources that helped individuals avoid mistakes, deepen understanding, and navigate relational complexities more thoughtfully.

Notably, Reddit discussions frequently included requests for book recommendations as well as personal reflections, analyses, and evaluations of these texts. This suggests that books function not only as static sources of knowledge but also as catalysts for discourse and interpretive engagement.

The continued reliance on books, despite the accessibility of digital media, indicates that individuals often associate print resources with depth, credibility, and structured learning. These findings suggest that traditional resources continue to complement digital platforms by offering more comprehensive and reflective forms of engagement, reinforcing their enduring relevance in understanding open relationships.

Theme 3. Information-Related Challenges

Building on the identified information needs and resources, the study also examined challenges encountered in accessing and evaluating information. Analysis revealed three primary issues: the lack of trusted resources, the persistence of misconceptions and stigma, and related privacy concerns. These challenges are interconnected and shaped by broader social and cultural conditions.

3.1 Lack of Trusted Resources

A major information-related challenge identified in this study is the limited availability of credible and trustworthy resources. Participants described difficulty locating reliable information, particularly within digital environments where anonymity often complicates credibility assessment. Although online platforms provide broad access to diverse perspectives, they also expose users to misinformation, fabricated narratives, and unverifiable experiences.

Participants emphasized that the challenge is not merely access to information, but access to information that is both accurate and trustworthy. Anonymous or informal platforms may offer visibility and community, yet the absence of accountability can undermine confidence in the information provided. This issue becomes especially significant for open relationships, where formal, culturally relevant, and socially accepted resources remain limited.

The lack of safe, inclusive spaces for discussion further intensified the shortage of trusted resources. Consequently, individuals—particularly those navigating stigmatized or marginalized identities—may encounter structural barriers that restrict access to dependable knowledge. This environment reinforces cycles of misinformation, uncertainty, and exclusion,

complicating informed decision-making.

3.2 Misconceptions and Stigma in Information Sharing

Misconceptions and stigma emerged as significant barriers to both accessing and sharing information. Participants consistently reported that open relationships are frequently misunderstood and commonly associated with infidelity, instability, or moral failure. These dominant assumptions create social environments where individuals are often required to explain, defend, or legitimize their relationship structures.

This burden of constant explanation positions information-sharing as emotionally demanding labor. Participants described the repeated need to correct misconceptions, educate others, and challenge stereotypes, often in the face of judgment or dismissal. Such experiences indicate that information-sharing is not a neutral act but one shaped by broader cultural stigma.

More critically, misinformation can produce tangible risks. Misunderstandings about the boundaries of open relationships may lead others to misinterpret consent, availability, or relational norms, potentially compromising personal safety. Thus, stigma functions not only as a social obstacle but also as a factor that can heighten vulnerability.

Netnographic findings reinforce these patterns, revealing that online discussions often reproduce judgmental narratives, including the conflation of open relationships with cheating or the misuse of ethical non-monogamy to justify dishonesty. These narratives obscure the core principles of consent, communication, and mutual agreement, further perpetuating stigma and limiting informed discourse.

3.3 Privacy Challenges

Privacy concerns represent another critical information-related challenge, particularly within cultural contexts where nontraditional relationships remain socially stigmatized. Participants described navigating constant tension between openness and self-protection, carefully managing what information to disclose, to whom, and under what circumstances.

The pressure to explain one's relationship status often stems from a desire to prevent misunderstanding or accusations of infidelity. However, disclosure also carries risks, particularly in tightly connected social environments where personal information may quickly circulate beyond intended audiences. This creates

ongoing uncertainty regarding trust, confidentiality, and social consequences.

As a result, participants often engage in selective disclosure practices, balancing transparency with caution to preserve privacy and personal boundaries. These behaviors reflect the broader concept of felt stigma, wherein anticipated judgment shapes communication choices and self-presentation.

While privacy management serves as a protective strategy, it can also be emotionally burdensome. The need to continuously evaluate social risk underscores how stigma extends beyond external judgment, influencing everyday information behavior and interpersonal decision-making.

The findings suggest that these information-related challenges are not isolated issues, but interconnected barriers shaped by broader social, cultural, and informational conditions. Limited access to credible resources contributes to misinformation, misinformation reinforces stigma, and stigma intensifies privacy concerns—collectively creating a cycle that constrains open information exchange.

This dynamic aligns with Wilson's (1999) Model of Information Behavior, which emphasizes how social, psychological, and environmental factors function as intervening variables that shape information access and use. Similarly, contextual approaches to information behavior highlight the importance of understanding how cultural norms and societal structures influence individuals' capacity to seek, interpret, and share information.

Within the Philippine context, traditional and religious norms surrounding relationships further intensify these barriers. Cultural expectations that prioritize monogamy may restrict access to safe, affirming, and culturally relevant resources for individuals in open relationships. Therefore, improving information access requires not only increasing resource availability but also addressing the broader structural and cultural conditions that shape information behavior.

Theme 4. Information Management

This theme examines how participants manage relationship-related information in open relationships, focusing on how they share, filter, and protect information. It highlights information management as the process of organizing and using information effectively. It shows its importance in understanding lived experiences in consensual non-monogamy, with

implications for developing more inclusive and responsive information services.

4.1 Strategic Information Sharing: Filtering and Disclosure

Participants engaged in deliberate and highly selective disclosure practices to protect privacy while fostering meaningful connections. Information sharing was typically gradual, with personal details withheld until trust, compatibility, and perceived safety were established. Rather than treating disclosure as a single decision, participants described it as a continuous process shaped by interaction quality and evolving trust.

Digital platforms played a key role in enabling this form of staged disclosure. Dating applications allowed participants to initially filter potential partners based on indicated preferences, while messaging transitions (e.g., moving from dating apps to private platforms) supported more controlled and secure communication. In some cases, anonymity or partial identity concealment was used strategically to reduce exposure while still enabling relational exploration. These practices illustrate how participants actively structure information flow across platforms to manage risk and maintain agency.

It aligns with broader patterns of disclosure decision-making, where individuals weigh trust, perceived risk, and anticipated responses before revealing personal information.

4.2 Cultural Sensitivities and Strategic Communication

Cultural norms, professional identity, and anticipated social judgment also shaped information management. Participants emphasized that communication strategies varied depending on audience context, particularly in environments where open relationships are likely to be misunderstood or morally evaluated.

In response, participants often simplified explanations, reframed open relationships in more socially acceptable terms, or selectively disclosed information to reduce stigma and misinterpretation. This adaptive communication reflects an awareness that meaning is not only conveyed but also socially interpreted. As such, managing information becomes a negotiation between authenticity and social intelligibility.

Professional identity further intensified these dynamics. Participants working in or aspiring toward professions associated with moral or public accountability expressed heightened caution in disclosure. This demonstrates how information management is not only interpersonal but also institutional, as individuals anticipate how

personal disclosures may affect credibility, reputation, or professional standing.

4.3 Information Management as Coping and Advocacy

Beyond privacy control, information management functioned as both a coping mechanism and a subtle form of advocacy. Participants used selective disclosure, boundary-setting, and narrative framing not only to avoid harm but also to maintain emotional stability in environments where misunderstanding and judgment are common.

At the same time, participants occasionally engaged in active meaning-making by guiding others toward more informed perspectives. This included correcting misconceptions, offering context, and reframing open relationships in ways that emphasize consent, communication, and mutual agreement. In this sense, information management extends beyond individual protection and becomes a way of influencing how knowledge about non-monogamy circulates within social networks.

This highlights information management as a socially embedded practice. It allows individuals to navigate stigma while also contributing, even indirectly, to broader shifts in awareness and understanding. Rather than passively receiving information norms, participants actively negotiate identity and meaning within constrained social contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study began with an interest in the imbalance in how open relationships are understood and discussed in the Philippine context. It shifted the focus from psychological interpretations to the information experiences of individuals in open relationships—how they seek, interpret, share, and manage information in everyday life.

Findings show that information experiences are contextual, dynamic, and deeply personal, shaped by participants' social backgrounds, values, and lived realities. Rather than passively consuming information, participants actively engaged in continuous sense-making, filtering information through personal beliefs, emotions, and social expectations. From initial exposure and interpretation to reflection and application in decision-making, meaning is constructed through ongoing interaction with information. This aligns with Informed Learning Theory, which emphasizes learning through meaningful, contextual engagement with information.

A key finding is the role of interactive and anonymous digital platforms as important spaces for information experiences. Platforms such as Reddit serve as alternative knowledge spaces where individuals can safely explore sensitive topics, validate experiences, and access diverse perspectives. In the Philippine context, where discussions of non-monogamy remain limited, these platforms become significant informal information sources. However, they also expose users to misinformation, highlighting the importance of critically evaluating information.

The study also highlights how stigma, religious norms, and family expectations shape how participants access, interpret, and share information. As a result, their practices involve not only information-seeking but also self-protection, selective disclosure, and identity management within broader cultural and relational contexts. Dominant monogamous norms and social stigma continue to limit safe opportunities for discussion and access to reliable information regarding non-monogamous relationships in the Philippines.

Overall, the study shows that the lived realities of individuals in open relationships are fundamentally shaped by information experiences, where meaning is continuously negotiated through engagement with digital platforms, communities, and personal reflection. These experiences help explain the limited and imbalanced public understanding of open relationships in the Philippines, influenced by stigma, restricted discourse, and limited access to reliable information.

Addressing this gap requires more inclusive and supportive information environments. Future research should involve more diverse participants to better capture the complexity of these experiences and further examine how digital platforms shape information behavior in stigmatized contexts, particularly given the study's limited sample and the contextual constraints of Reddit-based netnographic data. Culturally grounded studies are also needed to examine how Filipino values, religious beliefs, and social norms influence these information experiences. In doing so, the study underscores the important role of the information field and information professionals in fostering safe, inclusive, and accessible information environments for individuals navigating stigmatized experiences such as open relationships.

In practice, librarians, educators, and counselors should develop inclusive and context-sensitive information resources. Libraries and educational institutions can serve as safe, inclusive spaces by providing anonymous access to reliable information, curating diverse,

nonjudgmental collections, protecting user privacy, and fostering respectful dialogue through inclusive programs and services. Librarians can further support users by promoting information literacy and creating environments where individuals feel safe seeking information without fear of stigma or discrimination. Collaboration among mental health professionals, educators, and advocacy groups is also essential in supporting the informational, emotional, and social dimensions of these experiences.

In sum, the study highlights how information experiences shape meaning-making, identity formation, and relational decision-making among individuals in open relationships within the Philippine context.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTEREST

The author/s declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

DECLARATION ON SOURCES OF FUNDING

The author/s received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

DECLARATION OF AI USAGE

ChatGPT (OpenAI) was used to assist with language editing and improving the clarity and organization of the manuscript. The author reviewed and verified all content and is fully responsible for the final version.

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The PhJLIS is published by the School of Library and Information Studies, University of the Philippines Diliman. ISSN 2719-0471 (Online)

Mapping Resource Allocation Patterns: An Exploration of Subscription-Based Online Resources of Selected Philippine State Universities and Colleges

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Abstract

As higher education evolves, academic libraries in Philippine state universities and colleges (SUCs) face increasing demands to provide online resources and services that support new academic programs and information needs. This study examines how Philippine SUCs allocate and share subscription-based resources, using Wang and Chan's (2011) Theory of Instinctive Information Sharing as a theoretical framework. A needs analysis was conducted using data on the population and academic programs of the SUCs; subscription patterns and resource needs for their online subscriptions; and the utilization of identified library resources and services. Data were collected through a survey administered using Google Forms. Findings indicate that academic libraries have adapted to information and communication technologies and have included subscription-based online resources in their collections to support the information needs of their stakeholders. The study underscored that SUCs should (1) prioritize subscriptions relevant to the institution's needs, (2) encourage collaborative initiatives for resource sharing, (3) secure additional funding from government agencies, and (4) increase patron familiarity with available resources through training and awareness programs.

Keywords: Academic libraries; Electronic resource management; Higher education institutions; Resource allocation; State universities and colleges; Subscription-based online resources.

INTRODUCTION

Libraries play a critical role in supporting education through instruction and research, particularly in access to appropriate resources and services. This is paramount to the success of educational institutions. As such, libraries play a vital role in supporting and fostering education, research (Ullah & Usman, 2023), and the entire learning experience of students and faculty in state universities and colleges (SUCs). As higher education evolves and diversifies, the need for curated resources and services increases, and libraries need to adapt to changing paradigms and factors such as adequate information and communication technologies (Mubofu

& Chaula, 2023); sufficient financial resources (Kasim et al., 2023); formal agreements and written rules and legislation (Barretto & Dessai, 2021), among others, are considered essential in the design, implementation, and evaluation of such resources.

Academic libraries in higher education serve as foundations for learning and research, functioning not only as custodians of resources but also as dynamic institutions that nurture information literacy. SUCs are also instrumental in cultivating an environment where resource sharing is not only practiced but also optimized to enhance the learning experience of academic communities. Recognizing this inherent nature of library functions and services, academic libraries rally on

providing resources demanded by a specific community of higher education institutions, as espoused in the concept of Library 5.0, which emphasizes user-centered, technology-driven, and collaborative library services. Building on this assertion, library services and funding models may need to be reviewed and revisited to accommodate evolving resource demands and collaborative initiatives. It should also be noted that an encompassing, unified policy should be put in place.

Amid this unprecedented shift, SUCs are witnessing changes in resource allocation, driven by the ever-changing needs and diversity of academic programs and scholarly disciplines, the provision of online resources, and the attention of library staff. Charting the online resources that SUCs have subscribed to could be a key indicator in evaluating their capacity to efficiently provide academic support for research initiatives compared to their contemporaries within the Southeast Asian region or beyond. While some programs may well be supported, others remain underserved, indicating gaps in existing online resource subscriptions that call for closer examination. Mapping subscription patterns can indicate how effectively libraries support teaching and research functions.

As a pragmatic solution and to supplement inadequate information resources, libraries opted to share assets through formally established consortia and partnerships, which, for the most part, are in proximity to one another or whose respective stakeholders share similar information needs. For instance, the Mendiola Consortium exemplifies how institutions collaborate to expand access to information resources among their academic communities. Regardless of the resource-sharing procedures employed or the clarity of economic arrangements, participating institutions have collectively agreed to extend access to information, albeit within formal or legal frameworks. However, the feasibility of implementing such initiatives on a broader national, geographic, and academic scale among SUCs remains an open question.

Despite these developments, empirical understanding remains limited of how online resource subscriptions align with academic program needs and how publisher-curated collections influence resource utilization across the SUCs. To better understand institutional readiness for resource sharing, this study employs a needs assessment survey to examine SUCs' existing subscriptions, resource needs, and collection gaps. It further analyzes institutional profiles in terms of student population and academic programs, evaluates existing subscription patterns and identified resource needs, and assesses the utilization of library services and online

resources. By doing so, the study provides an empirical basis for understanding how resource allocation aligns with institutional demands and informs strategies for resource sharing and collaborative collection development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic Libraries as a Cornucopia of Online Resources

Libraries are crucial in shaping the journey of students and faculty in higher education. They serve as repositories of knowledge by offering books, journals, databases, and digital materials to support learning, teaching, and research. Libraries empower students and educators by acquiring and curating information sources to address the needs of the academe. As research hubs, libraries offer access to relevant information sources that help users explore and keep current with developments in their respective fields and engage in critical thinking (Ullah & Usman, 2023). As patrons' information needs change over time, academic libraries must track Web information resources to provide the information-seeking community with the authoritative data they need.

Preference Towards Subscription-based Online Resources

Ankrah and Atuase (2018) emphasized the importance of academic libraries adapting to the changes brought about by information and communication technologies to meet the sophisticated information needs of library users. Specifically, both authors found that postgraduate students preferred Google and other web-based databases over library online subscriptions. Compared to free Web resources, information in subscription-based online resources has undergone the rigors of publishing to ensure authority and accuracy. This includes reviewing and evaluating information sources so that incorrect material is nonexistent. Another benefit of subscription-based online resources is providing the option to utilize peer-reviewed materials, giving students accurate and authoritative information. Thus, subscription-based online resources are more reliable than the online sources found over the internet (Bell, 2007).

Following the advent of the Web, the internet has become the most readily available and widely used electronic resource among the faculty and students alike. In a survey, Oladiran and Tolulope (2019) noted that 121 students (42.3%) agreed that the internet is very helpful for accessing online databases and electronic journals. These numbers indicate a preference for online

resources. In this context, online resources are treated as electronic representations of information, including e-books, e-journals, online databases, the OPAC, digital libraries, CD-ROMs, online journal magazines, and e-learning tutors and tests. Given the dependence on the internet for information sources, mandatory utilization of subscribed online resources should be considered and supported by awareness campaigns on their availability, training on using these resources, and addressing power-outage concerns (Adeleke & Nwalo, 2017). Accordingly, perceived relevance also affects usage (Bentil et al., 2022). Mawere and Sai (2018) attributed this to the lack of proficiency in technological innovations, but training on appropriate search strategies can bridge this gap (Abogdera, 2022). This proficiency is attributed to students' belief that they are well equipped with the competencies in using online resources, but research found otherwise (Dukić & Striškić, 2015). Nonetheless, awareness is crucial to an increased patronage of these types of resources (Ankamah et al., 2024). Among others, libraries often enlist in a consortium to boost their capacity and expand library services at a reduced cost since participating institutions commit to an agreed or equal share in paying for the total amount needed to gain access to a specific collection, especially when the level of study of the students and use of online library resources are significantly related (Quadri, 2013).

Significance of a Library Consortium

As they become increasingly automated, libraries seek ways to collaborate and share resources. The adoption of technology has greatly empowered libraries to manage more resources. However, recurring economic, political, cultural, and social factors prevent libraries from functioning as they are expected. Under these circumstances, academic libraries would greatly benefit from resource sharing initiatives. This avenue for library cooperation not only enhances efficiency but also instills a sense of community among libraries, allowing better services and expanded access to information. Understanding resource sharing, recognizing the role of libraries, and acknowledging that no library is sufficient or self-sustaining ensures that bibliographic information, databases, catalogs, and more can be retrieved through sharing (Mubofu & Chaula, 2023).

In this context, other libraries continue to rely on their contemporaries for information due to limited resources. To address this gap, Chisita (2016) proposed a model on library consortia to widen access to resources. Users' demands and expectations, budget cuts, the cost of library materials (including electronic journals), and the rising cost of information resources

should be addressed. Accordingly, membership in library consortia entails navigating the intricacies of resource sharing, as Kasim and colleagues (2023) discuss. Barretto and Dessai (2021), discussing resource sharing, clarified that there is much to gain from implementing resource-sharing initiatives.

Although difficulties and challenges are bound to surface, planning and implementation are key, as are the stakeholders' acceptance of the terms and conditions for onboarding subscription-based online resources. Regarding electronic resource collection development, Tran and Guo (2021) note that academic libraries have expanded their collection portfolios to include e-book chapters, where users can search and print specific portions of a material the same way they do with e-journals, at their convenience. In the face of this development, academic libraries continue to work with shrinking budgets. To improve resource-sharing initiatives among academic libraries, best practices and pragmatic perspectives gained from work experience are expected to result in evidence-based decision-making.

Based on the authors' shared experiences acquiring subscription-based online resources, libraries often move through four stages. The first stage, which primarily deals with awareness of resources, seeks to gather information about the subscription-based online resource, such as its scope and expected benefits. Consequently, the second stage involves an initial assessment and evaluation, where decision-making information and feedback are critical. Publishers can provide temporary access to their subscription-based online resources through trial periods, enabling library patrons to gain first-hand knowledge of the resource's features, interface, and benefits.

After the library and its stakeholders have made an informed decision through dialogue on which subscription-based online resource to acquire, the library can initiate the third stage: negotiation. Like the second stage, this phase focuses on dialogue to discuss access, user training, technical support, and how to maximize the resource for the university. However, it occurs between the library and the publisher. Lastly, the fourth stage encompasses payment and the process of onboarding the resource in the library. In this stage, information on the license, budget changes, recurring costs, notification to the requestor, and the subscription's renewal date is important. These stages alone show the complexities of fully implementing subscription-based online resources in any given library.

Related literature suggests gathering evidence before adopting subscription-based online resources, citing

that a user needs analysis, along with research evidence, local evidence, and professional knowledge, should be employed to fit the locale (Mustafa & Abdullah, 2022). The collective scope and coverage of a library consortium or resource-sharing initiative vary depending on the institutional preferences of the participating libraries. This context provides an opportunity to examine a frame of reference wherein a distinct academic library shares its subscription-based online resources with multiple partner libraries. Expanding on this position, it is necessary to understand the determinants that prompt a library to share its resources with others.

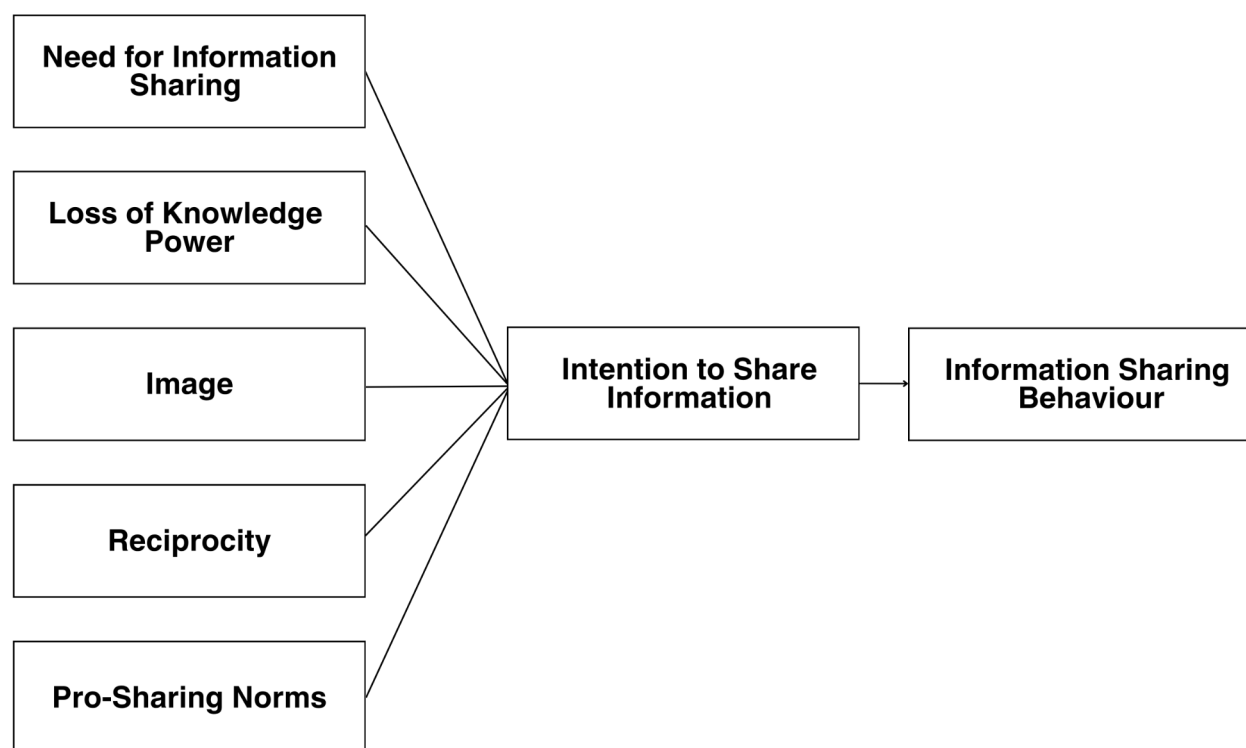
Theory of Instinctive Information Sharing

In clinical psychology, biology, and communication, human beings are literally and figuratively programmed to share information (Baek et al., 2017; Barasch, 2020; Vellani et al., 2024). Consistent with this predisposition, observed patterns of human action show varying information-sharing behaviors across social and cultural contexts. Wang and Chan (2011) presented a model that reflects a person's natural inclination to share information through elements such as the need for information sharing, loss of knowledge power, image, reciprocity, and pro-sharing norms.

Although these assertions pertain specifically to individual human behavior, this study suggests that libraries, as organizations, may display similar patterns in information sharing as an extension of human behavior (Jones, 2007; Lansdale, 1988). Since the word information in the literature and model has been used without strict regard for semantics, common library resources, regardless of their format, can be treated as carriers and media of information. For example, sharing its resources can improve a library's reputation among other libraries and educational institutions. The need for information sharing, on the other hand, can be construed as part of a library's mandate, obligation, and institutional values to lend or provide access to its resources between libraries that seek much-needed support from their contemporaries.

In contrast to the two previously mentioned elements, loss of knowledge power is perceived as a negative outcome, as it would require the donor library to distribute resources to recipients, which could otherwise remain solely available to it. Resources, once shared, reduce the essence or idea of exclusivity, prompting libraries to rethink decisions about resource sharing. Pro-sharing norms may constitute imagined or realized resource-sharing protocols in any given environment and type of library. This may take the form of a strong

Figure 1. *Wang and Chan's Model of Instinctive Information Sharing*



adherence to document delivery services among like-minded libraries. Lastly, reciprocity refers to equal or desirable exchanges of resources between donor and recipient libraries, wherein the mutual benefit of interchanging resources can be concluded through bilateral or multilateral agreements. These contributing scenarios, in part or in whole, reflect a library's information-sharing behavior. However, these assertions are yet to be explored and require further research in the context of Philippine libraries.

Understanding the model and premise behind Instinctive Information Sharing presents beneficial solutions for libraries that openly seek to share their resources as well as those that wish to engage in resource-sharing initiatives. Nonetheless, further investigation and analysis may still be needed to determine the specific resources a library requires. To address this dilemma objectively, libraries are highly encouraged to consult their stakeholders, students, and faculty body to obtain sound technical advice on collection development and resource sharing and to capitalize on its full potential (Riesen, 2023).

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design using an online survey administered through Google Forms. The questionnaire consists of three (3) parts: a) demographic profile of SUCs, including institutional population and academic programs; b) data on the online electronic subscriptions currently subscribed to, and the subscriptions identified as needed; and c) utilization rates of library services and resources across academic disciplines. The researchers developed the questionnaire and had it content-validated by the Section Head and the University Librarian. Their feedback improved the clarity and relevance of the questionnaire. No pilot testing was conducted.

The study employed total population sampling, targeting all 122 SUCs listed on the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) website. Invitations were sent, and follow-ups were conducted as necessary. Ethical considerations were observed through informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality of responses. Data collection occurred between July and September 2023, resulting in responses from 19 institutions, yielding a response rate of 15%. Data were analyzed using frequency distribution, percentages, mean scores, and ranking to determine subscription status, perceived usefulness, and resource utilization patterns.

FINDINGS

Profile of the Participating Institutions

Table 1 presents the distribution of participating SUCs per region and their respective estimated population. The data contextualizes the *need for information sharing*, wherein the estimated number of daily users can be used to justify establishing a resource-sharing protocol. The demography provides a definite number of potential beneficiaries that will directly make the most out of accessible online resource subscriptions once an agreement or partnership has materialized. The Western Visayas (Region VI) had the greatest number of respondents with four (21.1%) institutions. No participation is recorded for Region V (Bicol Region), Region X (Northern Mindanao), Region XI (Davao Region), and Region XIII (CARAGA).

Regional Profile

In addition to identifying the estimated total number of constituents within a given SUC, it is imperative to determine the overarching discipline or subject of the academic programs being offered, regardless of whether they are at the undergraduate, graduate, or postgraduate level, as indicated in Figure 1. Among the disciplines offered across the 19 SUCs, the majority offer Science and Technology degrees, with 17 institutions. This is followed by Social Sciences and Law, as well as Agriculture, each with 14 institutions, totaling 73.7%. Management and Economics, along with Health and Medicine, are similarly ranked as the third most-offered programs by field and discipline, with 13 institutions or 68.4%. Ten (10) institutions indicated that they offer programs related to the Arts and Humanities, totaling 52.6%. Additionally, individual programs such as veterinary medicine, engineering, architecture, IT, and tourism were offered by one institution each. Some institutions share programs such as engineering and graduate programs, ICT, HRM, food technology, biology, education, forestry, fishery, etc., in various combinations.

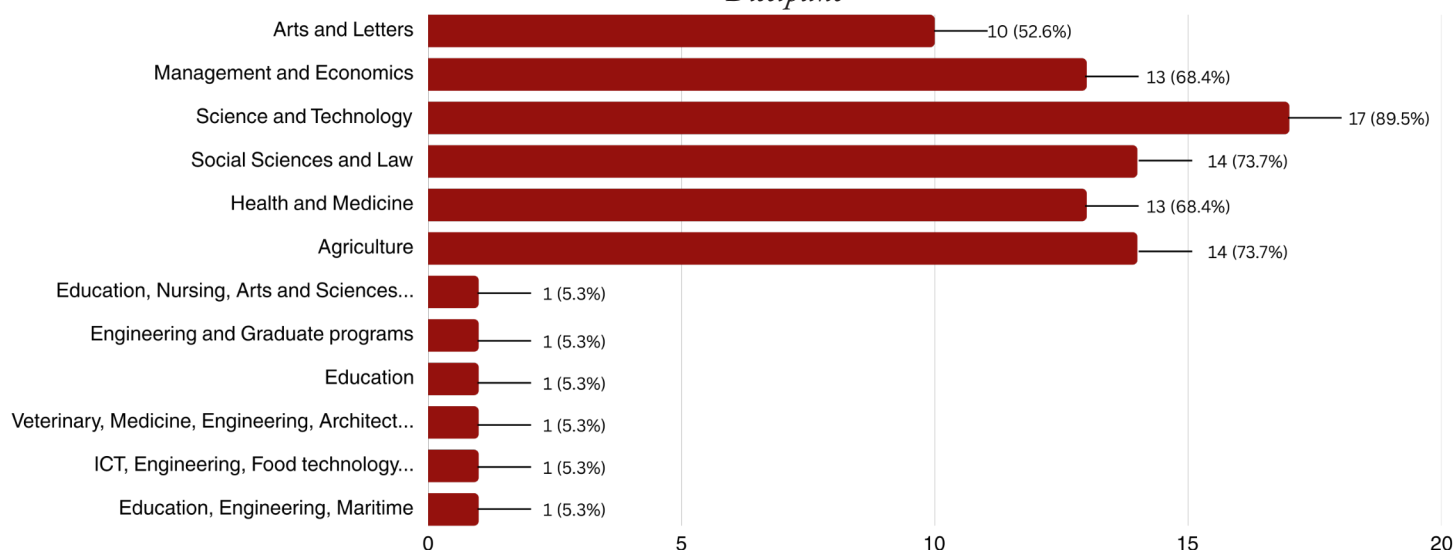
Enumerating the academic programs offered by participating SUCs enables libraries to complement them with appropriate online resource subscriptions. With a more intentional approach, libraries inclined toward organizing resource-sharing initiatives can select specific content, collections, and inclusions within a specific subscription that partner libraries can access when transacting with authorized vendors or publishers. The data captures the spectrum of disciplines that academic libraries in SUCs are obliged to sustain, which in turn sets an encompassing and similar precedent for

any SUC that wishes to organize a library consortium within its regional enclaves or otherwise. Below is the graph presenting the results and information of the

overview of how different academic fields are distributed among the institutions:

Table 1. *Population of the participating SUC (N=19)*

Region	Institutions	Estimated Population	Estimated Daily Users
Region IV-A - CALABARZON	Laguna State Polytechnic University	22,000	400 (1.8%)
Region IV-B – MIMAROPA	Occidental Mindoro State College	19,000	100 (0.5%)
NCR – National Capital Region	Eulogio Amang Rodriguez Institute of Science and Technology (EARIST)	15,000	300 (2%)
Region VI – Western Visayas	University of Antique – Main Campus	15,000	300 (2%)
BARMM – Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao	Mindanao State University	14,000	500 (3.6%)
Region XII – SOCCSKSARGEN	Sultan Kudarat State University	13,105	180 (1.4%)
Region VI – Western Visayas	Aklan State University	13,000	1,000 (7.7%)
Region VIII – Eastern Visayas	Southern Leyte State University	11,000	200 (1.8%)
Region VI – Western Visayas	Iloilo Science and Technology University	10,696	223 (2.1%)
Region VII – Central Visayas	Cebu Normal University	10,000	3,000 (30%)
CAR – Cordillera Administrative Region	Ifugao State University	10,000	800 (8%)
Region II – Cagayan Valley	Isabela State University	10,000	200 (2.0%)
Region IX – Zamboanga Peninsula	Basilan State College	9,000	2,000 (22.2%)
Region III – Central Luzon	Pampanga State Agricultural University	8,000	1,000 (12.5%)
Region XII – SOCCSKSARGEN	Cotabato Foundation College of Science and Technology	6,000	50 (0.8%)
Region I – Ilocos Region	Pangasinan State University	6,000	950 (15.8%)
Region VIII – Eastern Visayas	Samar State University	6,000	200 (3.3%)
Region VI – Western Visayas	Northern Iloilo State University	5,559	380 (6.8%)
BARMM – Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao	Sulu State College	5,000	200 (4%)

Figure 2. *Academic Programs by Field and Discipline (N=19) Utilization of Library Resources Based on Field and Discipline*

Using a six-point scale (1- *Mostly used*, 2 - *Frequently Used*, 3 - *Moderately Used*, 4 - *Occasionally Used*, 5 - *Rarely Used*, and 6 - *Least Used*), respondents rated the utilization of library resources based on their alignment with the programs offered within their SUCs. Table 2 presented an opportunity to evaluate resource use across academic disciplines, namely the Arts and Humanities, Management and Economics, Science and Technology, Social Sciences and Law, Health and Medicine, and Agriculture.

Table 2 shows resource utilization by library patrons, regardless of format. Science and Technology had “Most Used” (5), “Frequently Used” (3), “Moderately Used” (9), “Occasionally Used” (1), Rarely Used (0), and “Least Used” (1). The results indicate that Science and Technology resources are useful and that most participating respondents currently offer academic programs in their respective academic institutions, as evidenced in Table 1. On the other hand, the resources

on Agriculture showed the following results: “Mostly Used” (2), “Frequently Used” (1), “Moderately Used” (1), “Occasionally Used” (5), “Rarely Used” (5), and “Least Used” (5). This result indicates that resource usage in the Agriculture discipline is poor, even though 14 institutions have indicated that they are offering academic programs within this discipline. This suggests that the same institutions lack sufficient online resource subscriptions that cater to Agriculture. Between Science and Technology and Agriculture, varied patterns of utility are also shown in the Arts and Humanities, Management and Economics, Social Sciences and Law, and Health and Medicine. Considering this outcome, the hypothesis that participating libraries will exhibit a significant utilization rate for their library resources based on the same field and discipline of the academic programs their SUCs offer indicates a nonreciprocal circumstance in several disciplines, such as Agriculture and Health and Medicine.

Table 2. *Resources used by Library Patrons (By Academic Discipline) (N=19)*

Scale	Most Used	Frequently Used	Moderately Used	Occasionally Used	Rarely Used	Least Used
Arts and Humanities	3	2	4	3	4	3
Management and Economics	2	4	3	4	3	3
Science and Technology	5	3	9	1	0	1
Social Sciences and Law	5	5	0	4	2	3
Health and Medicine	2	4	2	2	5	4
Agriculture	2	1	1	5	5	5

Online Subscriptions

Table 3 shows that 11 institutions (57.9%) are subscribed to single sign-on (SSO) systems such as OpenAthens and Shibboleth, while the remainder indicate otherwise. This indicates institutional readiness for user accessibility and authentication. Investing in SSO platforms supports seamless access to resources within and beyond the institution. These platforms can accommodate library consortia, allowing the participating universities to access any given online resource subscription simultaneously. Academic libraries that have successfully adopted a common SSO platform can therefore reduce their individual subscription costs.

Table 4 presents the list of electronic resources subscribed to by the institutions. It shows the subscription status, perceived utility, and subscription needs for academic electronic resources.

- Philippine E-Journals, a platform that hosts journal titles published by numerous HEIs in the Philippines, reported a mean perceived usefulness score of 4.1, the highest among the included online resource subscriptions in this study, wherein 8 institutions (42.11%) have indicated that they are currently subscribed to the platform, yet 73.7% report a necessity for this subscription. Although Philippine eJournals can clearly be considered a multidisciplinary subscription owing to the journal titles it indexes, the inability to subscribe suggests that the overall subscription fee outweighs the library's expressed needs.
- Elsevier (Mendeley, ScienceDirect, SciVal, Scopus) – with a mean perceived usefulness score of 3.7, only 15.8% of institutions are subscribed to these resources, while a significant 52.6% express a need for this subscription.
- EBSCO Academic Search Ultimate – with a mean perceived usefulness score of 3.6, 36.8% of institutions have subscribed to this resource, while an additional 4.1% indicate a need for it.
- ODILO – 10.53% of institutions have subscribed to ODILO, with a perceived usefulness score of 3.3, and 26.3% of the institutions have identified a need for this subscription.
- Gale – although 10.53% of institutions have subscribed to this resource, there is limited information on the perceived usefulness of

the content or the extent of the subscriptions needed.

This pattern appears consistent across other databases, demonstrating the percentage of institutions with active subscriptions, their corresponding perceived usefulness scores, and the percentage of institutions that still need and are yet to acquire subscriptions.

Table 3. Frequency distribution of subscriptions to Single Sign-On Systems (N=19)

Subscription Status	Count
Yes	11 (57.9%)
No	8 (42.1%)

DISCUSSION

This study found that most SUC libraries have only one to six online subscriptions but expressed a desire to acquire more. The low number of online subscriptions has created noticeable gaps in education, sciences, computing, engineering, and agriculture. Although there is no exact number of online resource subscriptions that libraries are required to subscribe to in the Philippines, there is a general notion that available electronic resources should be sufficient to support the academic programs offered in an HEI. In this case, although the participating respondents indicated that they have existing subscriptions, library administrators have explicitly stated that they are continuously searching for more opportunities to access and integrate online resource subscriptions, suggesting that they still lack additional resources.

Based on the findings, there is a high demand for online resources in the fields of science and technology, health and medicine, and agriculture. It can be surmised that online subscriptions such as Philippine E-Journals, Elsevier (Mendeley, ScienceDirect, SciVal, Scopus), ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, Wiley Online Library, and Turnitin are perceived as the most useful, although considered to be multidisciplinary, was due to the reason that the indexed journal titles, articles, available content, and inclusive features or tools are found adequate and reliable to support the research and academic needs of the respondents. Additionally, these resources offer flexibility in accessing numerous local and international publications. Because some resources are irrelevant to the academic programs offered in an institution, OpenAthens, Statista, and CCP Encyclopedia of Philippine Art, Digital Edition are among the least-known online subscriptions. Having identified the online resource subscriptions seen as

Table 4. *Library subscription assessment summary (N=19)*

Subscription-based Online Resources	Number of Institutions with subscription	Mean score on the perceived usefulness of the subscription	Number of Institutions in need of subscription
Philippine e-Journals	8 (42.11%)	4.1	14 (73.7%)
Elsevier (Mendeley, ScienceDirect, SciVal, Scopus)	3 (15.8%)	3.7	10 (52.6%)
EBSCO Academic Search Ultimate	3 (15.8%)	3.6	7 (36.8%)
ODILO	5 (26.3%)	3.3	5 (26.3%)
Gale	2 (10.53%)	-	-
Wiley Online Library	4 (21.1%)	3.6	8 (42.1%)
JSTOR	2 (10.53%)	3.5	7 (36.8%)
ProQuest Dissertation & Theses Global	4 (21.1%)	3.8	14 (73.7%)
ProQuest Central	1 (5.3%)	-	-
Turnitin	3 (15.8%)	3.7	9 (47.4%)
Cambridge Core	1 (5.3%)	3.3	4 (21.1%)
IG Library	1 (5.3%)	-	-
EBSCO eBook Academic Collection	1 (5.3%)	3.7	9 (47.4%)
PressReader	1 (5.3%)	3.1	3 (15.8%)
Taylor & Francis Online	1 (5.3%)	3.5	8 (42.1%)
Vital Source Bridge	1 (5.3%)	-	-
Knimbus	1 (5.3%)	-	-
Emerald Insight	1 (5.3%)	3.6	8 (42.1%)
Clinical Key Nursing	1 (5.3%)	-	-
OpenAthens	-	2.9	3 (15.8%)
EBSCO Discovery Service	-	3.3	2 (10.5%)
New York Times	-	2.7	4 (21.1%)
Statista	-	2.9	3 (15.8%)
CCP Encyclopedia of Philippine Art Digital Edition	-	2.9	3 (15.8%)
SAGE Premier	-	3.3	3 (15.8%)
Web of Science	-	3.3	8 (42.1%)
Project MUSE	-	2.8	3 (15.8%)
American Chemical Society (ACS Publications)	-	3.0	5 (26.3%)
Journal of Visualized Experiments (JoVE)	-	2.9	4 (21.1%)
Labster	-	2.8	2 (10.5%)
Springer Nature Contemporary eJournals	-	3.2	4 (21.1%)
MLA	-	3.2	3 (15.8%)
Chicago Manual of Styles	-	2.8	3 (15.8%)

advantageous and favorable among SUCs, it would be possible to limit and prioritize the acquisition of these resources when organizing or instituting a consortium, at least among SUCs. Agreeing on which specific subscriptions to share would enable participating academic libraries to pool the required financial resources accurately, thereby avoiding any buildup of unprogrammed or excess budget that would be needed elsewhere in the library or the SUC itself.

Beyond securing ample financial resources and partnerships, libraries face the predicament of whether such an endeavor is justifiable within their own institution. In this study, average daily users of library services range from 50 to 3000, with a mean of 1025.6 and a median of 800. Such resource-sharing initiatives will be highly beneficial, since several hundred students and faculty members will be able to access resources at the same time. Among these users, the average familiarity with the library's e-resources is moderate. Despite the objective of obtaining relevant information from all registered SUCs in the country, challenges in locating respondents arose because some of the contact information listed on the official CHED website was outdated. As a result, the data received and analyzed came from a limited number of respondents.

Furthermore, of the 122 SUCs contacted, only 19 SUCs responded. This low response rate relative to the number of SUCs contacted may have skewed the study's results. The findings also suggest that academic libraries should prioritize acquiring electronic resources and online subscriptions, grounded in evidence-based librarianship and empirical data (Mustafa & Abdullah, 2022; Tran & Guo, 2021).

CONCLUSION

The findings highlight the need for more strategic and collaborative efforts to develop electronic resource collections among SUC libraries. Although many institutions already maintain online subscriptions, findings indicate that existing resources remain insufficient to fully support the wide range of academic disciplines and research needs within their respective universities. The study also highlights the potential benefits of establishing library consortia and resource-sharing partnerships among SUCs. Through coordinated acquisition and shared subscriptions, libraries may reduce subscription costs while expanding access to scholarly resources for students, faculty members, and researchers. While the partial response percentage from the surveyed institutions may limit the broader applicability of the findings, the insights gathered remain valuable. The recommendations

presented are designed to address the core challenges identified and to leverage the opportunities revealed by the data. By implementing these approaches, libraries can take meaningful steps toward improvement, even amid inadequate resource sharing. The unending commitment and future research will further reinforce the groundwork laid by this study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Prioritize relevant, need-based subscriptions.

By identifying varied and dynamic institutional data needs, libraries must adopt an intentional, informed collection development strategy. This begins with a systematic understanding of the library institution's demographics, policies and guidelines, organizational structure, and services. Drawing from best practices such as those defined by the University of Missouri (2018), appraising curricula, faculty research, thesis subjects, disciplinary trends, and symposium outcomes provides a strong structure for computing the importance of collections. Eventually, comparing this data against recognized ideals offers a meaningful initial point for creating collections that are both receptive and future-ready.

Encourage collaborative resource sharing initiatives.

The Philippine library environment mirrors the worldwide drive toward collaboration and resource sharing, as proven by the rising number of consortia acknowledged by Fresnido and Yap (2014), Verzosa (2004), and Chisita (2016). These creativities emphasize the value of institutional associations in addressing everyday challenges in professional growth, funding disproportions, technological interruptions, and misalignment between goals, objectives, and actions. As academic progress continues, leveraging consortia for online subscription sharing offers a strategic pathway to meet rising data demands and adopt reasonable access across libraries.

If a single SUC or a coalition deems it necessary to support its contemporaries by providing shared access to electronic resources, its libraries should adopt and revisit Wang and Chan's (2011) model for Instinctive Information Sharing before forming a consortium or establishing any agreement. The theory directly supports and encourages institutions to provide or sustain a resource-sharing partnership that would benefit others in need.

Secure additional government funding.

The survey's quantitative strategies provided valuable

insights into demographic profiles, academic subscriptions, and library resource procedural patterns across SUCs, disclosing a clear disparity between patrons' data concerns and the availability of the institutions' online resources. The gap highlights the urgency of developing resource allocation strategies that are responsive to each institution's distinctive background. Notably, the demand for online subscriptions is strongest in science and technology, health and medicine, and agriculture; these fields are critical to national development. However, budgetary constraints continue to hinder expansion efforts. As Duran (2021) recommends, expanding awareness of library services among larger demographic groups and pursuing external funding through grants and endowments are viable strategies to lessen financial budget constraints. While the latter may be unpredictable, both strategies offer pathways to maintain and enhance library services, ensuring that SUCs remain furnished to meet sprouting academic and research demands. To support requests to increase the library's budget intended for online resource subscriptions, endorsements from library-faculty committees, research offices, academic technical working groups, and other similar offices may be sought. These authoritative bodies must provide clear justification that underscores the demand for such resources, which are deemed fundamental to the successful delivery of research and instruction in their institutions.

Increase patron familiarity with available resources.

SUCs in the Philippines recognize the growing demand for subscription-based electronic information sources in academic settings. However, using these resources requires new technological competencies among both library staff and patrons. As Chisita (2016) notes, understanding the organization and structure of digital content is crucial for users to browse and select information effectively. Compared with common search engines, electronic resource subscriptions offer curated, trustworthy, and reliable content, which enhances research tractability and serviceability. Equipping patrons with the skills to use these tools not only improves access to quality information but also strengthens the library's role in forward-moving academic excellence. Therefore, academic libraries should invite or request training from product specialists to discuss in depth online resource subscriptions they wish to incorporate into their institution. For a more guided and targeted approach, librarians can outline distinctive information sessions for students, faculty members, and researchers.

Integrating these resources into library orientations, seminars, and conferences not only highlights their value but also empowers library users to traverse and apply them in practice. Strategic endorsements through the library guides, websites, staff engagement, and peer networks further increase access and observability. Viewed through the lens of the Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) theory, awareness becomes an essential factor influenced by access circumstances, usage objectives, library user opinions, digital learning, and challenges being encountered (Ankrah & Atuase, 2018). By adopting these attributes, libraries can foster a more well-versed and engaged user base, eventually advancing institutional goals and aspirations toward academic excellence and sustainability of data and information sources.

DECLARATION ON CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

DECLARATION ON SOURCES OF FUNDING

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

DECLARATION ON THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence tools were used in the preparation of this manuscript.

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The PhJLIS is published by the School of Library and Information Studies, University of the Philippines Diliman.
ISSN 2719-0471 (Online)

Power/Knowledge, Intellectual Freedom and Censorship in Libraries

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Abstract

This article examines censorship and intellectual freedom in libraries through Foucault's concept of knowledge/power and discourse. Foucault recognizes libraries as one of the institutions that control discourse. Discourse is controlled if certain resources are censored, which inhibits intellectual freedom. The paper discusses the roles of various agencies and individuals in library collection development to show how power/knowledge dynamics play out in libraries. To better understand it in the local context, the movements by government agencies to censor certain materials from circulation in the Philippines were discussed. Censorship poses implications for the knowledge that library users can discover in the library. The library, librarian, library users, library collection, and other institutions or agencies have varying degrees of power over discourse and, at the same time, the knowledge that they hold implies that power. A comprehensive intellectual freedom policy for libraries is recommended to help balance power/knowledge dynamics in libraries.

Keywords: Power/Knowledge, Discourse, Intellectual freedom, Censorship

INTRODUCTION

Libraries are expected to promote intellectual freedom through their diverse collections where discourse is propagated. The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) declared in their Statement on Libraries and Intellectual Freedom (1999) that “human beings have a fundamental right to access to expressions of knowledge, creative thought and intellectual activity, and to express their views publicly” (para. 2). Intellectual freedom is at the core of the librarianship profession (IFLA, 1999), and it is defined by the American Library Association (ALA) (n.d.b) as the “right to access information from all points of view, in all formats, and without restriction” (para. 10). In the Philippines, the Code of Ethics for Philippine Librarians (Professional Regulatory Board for Librarians [PRBFL], 2006), which also promotes intellectual freedom, stated Section 1.3 that “librarians shall uphold and promote the right to information...” The National Competency-Based Standards for Filipino Librarians (NCBSFL)

(PRBFL, 2015) also stipulates, under the domain of Ethics and Values and Personal Competencies, that librarians are expected to understand and promote intellectual freedom and freedom of information. The 2025 revised competency standards, now referred to as the National Competency-Based Standards for Filipino Library and Information Science Professionals (NCBSFLISP), does not make any explicit mention of intellectual freedom but it does mention under the Information Sources Domain that access must be provided to resources “without bias and prejudice” and the recognition of the librarian’s role in facilitating access to information under the Information Services Domain (PRBFL, 2025).

Conversely, censorship in libraries inhibits intellectual freedom. It is the “prohibition of the production, distribution, circulation, or display of a work by a governing authority on grounds that it contains objectionable or dangerous material” (Reitz, 2013). Censorship is further recognized as involving the

“silencing of viewpoints” (Smolla & Nimmer, 2006, as cited in Ademodi, 2011, p. 19). With censorship, users are unable to gain access to certain ideas and concepts that might give them alternative perspectives on a certain topic. Censorship directly impedes intellectual freedom that libraries are supposed to be promoting. Librarians are expected to reject censorship as it contrasts with the libraries’ core mission to provide access to information (IFLA, 2012)

Despite the mandate for libraries and librarians to promote intellectual freedom, censorship persists in different forms (IFLA, 2025). Government agencies can implement legislation that censors certain materials, such as the memos released by government agencies in the Philippines in 2021 to prevent the circulation of specific publications due to their content. Library boards can make decisions on the library’s collection and access policies. Library users themselves, such as parents and community members, may also have their own sentiments and opinions on which resources should be made accessible by libraries, as in the cases of book banning in the United States and Australia.

The contrast between censorship and intellectual freedom places the role of libraries in the spotlight with their mission to provide access to information. Library collections are developed by librarians with various agencies and groups in accordance with existing laws and policies, and the community that the library serves. This demonstrates the power of certain people to determine which information is made available to library users and consequently shapes discourse. This aligns with Foucault’s view of the library as an institution that controls discourse (Foucault, 1971/2005). If certain materials are effectively censored, then the ideas and concepts within them are bound to be inaccessible and excluded from discussions among library users, which defeats the intellectual freedom mission of the library. The library wields power over what sort of knowledge users may obtain through their collections.

Given this, this paper explores the relationship between censorship and intellectual freedom in libraries through Foucault’s concept of power/knowledge and discourse. The roles of various agencies and individuals in library collection development are discussed alongside ALA’s documented cases of censorship to illustrate how the dynamics of power/knowledge are expressed in libraries. Specifically, the case of censorship in Philippine libraries in 2021 is examined to understand how power/knowledge and discourse are exhibited in the local context.

Role of Libraries in Discourse and Intellectual Freedom

Foucault argued that “in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures...” (1971/2005, p. 316). Also, Foucault recognizes the library as one of the institutions that control and reinforce discourse. The library preserves the continuity of discourse through its collection of resources with varied perspectives from different time periods (Radford & Radford, 2001). Providing access to these materials constitutes intellectual freedom. On the other hand, we have to acknowledge that despite the libraries’ best efforts in collecting and preserving information resources, there is a limit to how much collection each library can maintain. This highlights the library’s power to legitimize knowledge and truth (Radford, 1992), which is manifested in how discourse is influenced by the availability of information resources. In this case, if censorship is enforced in libraries, it is worth pondering how much control is exercised over discourse.

Libraries have a certain control over discourse not only through the availability of resources but also through the “rules concerned with the principles of classification, ordering and distribution” (Foucault, 1971/2005, p. 320). The very act of classification performed in libraries is a form of control – libraries control how resources are arranged within them (Radford & Radford, 2001). Radford (2003) referred to the arrangement of materials within libraries following a certain classification scheme as *discursive formations* based on Foucault’s definition of the term. Discursive formations are tangible and can be directly experienced, in this context, through the actual placement of books on the shelves based on the subject that they have been assigned. Classification of materials could very well affect the user’s search process, and their placement on the shelves could affect how much a user may find when they visit a certain section pertaining to their topic of interest.

“The library collection is not only a place where discourse is controlled through organizational procedures but, also, the library itself, through its architecture and furnishings, becomes a visible monument to this discursive order and control” (Radford & Radford, 2001, p. 305). The location of each section of the library could determine how much information a person might find. For instance, library users may freely browse open shelves and, in turn, find related information on other books on the same shelf, unlike in a closed-shelf setup. The rules enforced inside the library illustrate the library’s control over user behavior. The library can determine access privileges

through its policies. Thus, the library is an institution of control that has the power to shape discourse. Still, as someone who can exercise intellectual freedom, the interpretation of the knowledge contained within libraries remains up to the user.

POWER/KNOWLEDGE AND CENSORSHIP IN LIBRARIES

Foucault (1975/1995) posited that “power and knowledge directly imply one another” (p. 27). Power and knowledge are inevitably entwined. The library as a repository of knowledge is a place that holds power. Librarians, who are recognized as the stewards of knowledge, hold power over what knowledge may be found inside the library. Similarly, the knowledge that library users may obtain from the collection empowers them. Yet power/knowledge in the library is more than just the librarians and users.

What happens when there are certain actors, such as the government, that impose restrictions on the library to censor materials? In such cases of censorship, Pierre’s (2005) interpretation of Foucault in the academic library context rings true. He remarked that, “Knowledge can be withheld as an exercise of power, and power can be imposed through knowledge if its transmission is curtailed” (p. 152). Should censorship take place, the library resources in question will be pulled out, and the knowledge contained within them will be effectively withheld.

Pierre (2005) goes on to say that the second statement holds true in modern academic libraries and points out the power that publishers have over library acquisitions because they dictate subscription fees and resource costs. While libraries do promote intellectual freedom and provide access to a variety of materials, we must acknowledge that it is financially and physically impossible to acquire every material available. To address this, libraries have their collection development policies to guide them in selecting and acquiring resources. Each library serves a particular community, and the collection must cater to their information needs. This begs the question: how does library selection differ from censorship?

Censorship or Selection?

Censorship in the context of libraries, based on the earlier definition, is the prohibition of access to certain materials decided by a governing authority. In ALA’s definition (n.d.b), this governing authority could be a person, group, or organization/business. People who decide what is prohibited are called *censors*. It can be argued that librarians are acting as censors since the very act of selection in libraries means that not all materials

may be acquired in a particular field.

However, as mentioned earlier, selection is made due to both financial and space constraints. Selection criteria exist to guide librarians in selecting resources. Asheim (1953) noted that what differentiates selection from censorship is their approach towards the materials in question. Selection assumes a positive approach and evaluates the value of materials as a whole. Meanwhile, censorship assumes a negative approach by finding vulnerability wherever it may be found inside a material and only focusing on those portions. “Selection seeks to protect the right of the reader to read; censorship seeks to protect – not the right – but the reader himself from the fancied effects of his reading” (Asheim, 1953, p. 67). Asheim refers instead to librarians as selectors. Selectors might be unable to make everything available for their users that might hinder one’s freedom to read what they want; nevertheless, librarians strive to provide various materials showing different perspectives on the same topic as much as possible within the constraints.

Asheim (1953) mentioned that a selector “looks for values, for strengths, for virtues” (p. 66). Doyle (2002) critiques this statement by arguing that the selector is the same as a censor in instances where they reject a book based on conflict with their personal values. He emphasized that it was unclear whose set of values, strengths, and virtues should be used as the standard in selection. In another article by Asheim (1983, as cited in Doyle, 2002), the values and virtues are removed and instead refers to the ideal as the *unbiased selection*. The unbiased selection refers to the provision of a balanced library collection that covers a variety of viewpoints on different topics “whether the librarian likes it or not” (Asheim, 1983, as cited in Doyle, 2002, p. 19). It ensures that readers are provided with unrestricted access to different materials, and what they choose to do with their right to access these materials is up to them.

In contrast, Hole (1985, as cited in Doyle, 2002) contends that the censorship that librarians do during the selection process, especially when it involves harmful materials such as bomb-making manuals, is at times morally justified. Hole’s perspective counters that of Asheim’s, but both illustrate the power that librarians have in deciding which information resources become part of the library’s collection. In the first place, they are also primarily responsible for crafting the collection development policy (CDP), although in other cases, the CDP falls under the purview of the library board, which includes members of the community. In the end, Doyle (2002) agreed with Asheim’s position on providing a balanced collection because it empowers patrons to distinguish good from bad in these materials, rather

than leaving a select few to decide for them. Selection policies must be properly set in place to ensure that the library's collection does not restrict intellectual freedom.

Challenged Books vs Intellectual Freedom

Librarians may be the ones in charge of developing the collection, but libraries ultimately exist to provide access to the community they serve, which is why each library has its collection tailored to the needs of its user community. Consequently, the user community has the power to provide their suggestions and insights for library selection. For this reason, their feedback is solicited. Still, it is the librarian's prerogative whether user feedback is considered.

Apart from that, users can exercise their power through challenging the resources available in the library. Challenge is when a specific person or group files their contention about a library material for it to be removed or restricted (ALA, n.d.b). It is a form of expressing censorship given its purpose to restrict access to certain materials. Based on the recent report of ALA (2024, 2026), 2025 has the second-highest recorded number of total challenges with 4,235 unique titles, while 2023 remains the highest with 4,240 unique titles.

ALA observed that there is a notable increase in the percentage of organized censorship attempts, with 92% of the total challenges in 2025 from pressure groups (ALA, 2026). These cases show organized attempts to remove books about "race, history, gender identity, sexuality, and reproductive health" (ALA, n.d.a, para. 6) in contrast with the majority of challenges prior to 2020, which mostly came from parents. The common factor among all challenges is "political or religious disagreement" (p. 7) with the perspectives present in the targeted books (ALA, 2026). These organized challenges to censor multiple titles directly infringe on intellectual freedom because there is intent to remove them from both school and public libraries. Should these cases be successful in censoring certain titles, it would effectively lead to limiting access to those materials.

Even though parents and other groups or individuals have the right to express their opinions regarding the materials that they want to challenge, they are still bound by the procedures of the library regarding such issues. It is specified in the ALA Intellectual Freedom Manual under the section on Access to Library Resources and Services for Minors that parents can only restrict access for their own child and not other children—the reason why challenged books usually do not get banned because banning also removes the rights of other children to access the same book (Magi & Garnar, 2015). Libraries are still bound by their mission

to advocate for intellectual freedom despite these challenges. Their power stems from the existence of library policies on how to handle book challenges and the guidelines from ALA, the national library organization, that has power over libraries. This also showed how librarians' knowledge about censorship and intellectual freedom policies empowered them to counter the challenges forwarded by the challengers

Problems arise when self-censorship is exercised by librarians to preempt challenges on controversial materials, which circles back to the issue of selection. And unlike challenges submitted by parents, concerned individuals or pressure groups, there are no formal records on self-censorship (Whelan, 2009). Self-censorship could occur during the selection process before acquisition or after acquisition through the placement of materials in a different or restricted section, or mismatched labeling (Whelan, 2009). In the case of children's or young adult literature, Whelan (2009) exemplifies that certain titles might be moved instead to the adult section which limits children's access. Such instances further demonstrate the power of librarians over the library collection and how they exert their control even under the circumstance that they acquired the allegedly controversial titles.

Censorship in the Philippines

In the Philippines, censorship memos from government agencies were released following the creation of the National Taskforce to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC). There is the Commission on Higher Education in Cordillera Administrative Region (CHED-CAR) Regional Memorandum 113, series of 2021 and *Komisyon ng Wikang Filipino* (KWF) Memorandum 2022-0663 (De Vera, 2021; Villanueva, 2022). Both memos sought the removal of "subversive" materials from circulation.

The memo from KWF was eventually voided because censorship is not part of its function (Boiser & Aurelio, 2022). Nevertheless, the fact that KWF attempted to ban five (5) books remains. The reason cited was due to the subversive and anti-government nature of the content of the books. The following are the books:

1. *Teatro Politikol Dos* by Malou Jacob;
2. *Kalatas: Mga Kwentong Bayan at Kwentong Buhay* by Rommel B. Rodriguez;
3. *Tawid-diwa sa Pananagisag ni Bienvenido Lumbera: Ang Bayan, ang Manunulat, at ang Magasing Sagisag sa Imahinatibong Yugto ng Batas Militar 1975-1979* by Dexter B. Cayanes;

4. *May Hadlang ang Umaga* by Reuel M. Aguila.

Specific passages from the books were highlighted to emphasize which parts are subversive such as the passage in *Teatro Politikal Dos* that described EDSA as “the best thing that happened after fifteen years of Martial Law” (Jacob, 2022, as cited in Mongaya, 2022, para. 7). The book authored by Cayanes was banned because it referenced works of communist rebel leaders Jose Ma. Sison and Julieta de Lima, and works on Marxism. Looking back on the distinction between selection and censorship, this is an act of censorship since the books were not evaluated as a whole for their content, but rather specific parts were targeted for banning. This banning attempt openly opposed the narratives presented in the books that express the experiences of Filipinos during the martial law period. This is an attempt to control the narratives available about Martial Law, which infringes on intellectual freedom.

The other incident was the memo released by CHED-CAR on October 21, 2021, and their director, Demetrio Anduyan Jr., urged for the removal of “subversive” materials from the libraries and information services of higher education institutions (HEIs) (De Vera, 2021). The initiative was dubbed as *Ugnayang Laban sa Impormasyong Rendido at Akdang Dulot-Terrorismo* (ULIRAT), which is part of the actions discussed during the Cordillera ELCAC task force meeting. Subversive materials were defined in the memo as “literatures, references, publications, resources, and items that contain pervasive ideologies of the Communist-Terrorist Groups (CTGs)” (De Vera, 2021). The memorandum itself is an act of censorship as it pushes for the removal of the so-called subversive materials. By doing so, they are restricting access to materials that they claim to influence the reader’s consciousness and may radicalize them. Schools were directed to turn over such materials to the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA) and provide a list of all items. This initiative shows that CHED-CAR used its power over HEIs in their region to control the knowledge that students can access.

Different groups and individuals released statements denouncing KWF’s and CHED-CAR’s memo. Faculty members from the University of the Philippines’ Department of Filipino and Philippine Literature found it ironic that KWF, the agency tasked to promote Philippine languages, released the memo to ban books written in our local languages during *Buwan ng Wika* (Mongaya, 2022). Rey Salvosa, former University of Cordilleras president, criticized the memo from CHED-CAR, saying that the education system exists so students would learn how to think for themselves on what is right and wrong (De Vera, 2021). He also mentioned that

“When an institution decides what you can and cannot read, that is the same thing as telling you what you can or cannot think about” (para. 14). Professor Mary Grace Golfo-Barcelona, the Dean of UP School of Library and Information Studies at that time, stressed that libraries should denounce all forms of censorship (Perez-Rubio & de Santos, 2021). She said that censorship goes against the Code of Ethics for Registered Librarians and IFLA’s Code of Ethics for Librarians and other Information Workers. The faculty of UP SLIS (2021) collectively released a statement denouncing the banning of books from libraries arguing that . These statements show how censorship efforts by government agencies infringe on intellectual freedom. The different groups voiced their opinions and pushed back against these efforts.

Power/Knowledge and Discourse

Foucault (1982) wrote that to understand power relations, “we should investigate the forms of resistance and attempts made to dissociate these relations” (p. 780). Thus, this paper explored how librarians and concerned groups struggled against censorship campaigns to protect the intellectual freedom of readers. Each group has its own stake in the issue of censorship in libraries. As Ademodi (2011) put it, there are many stakeholders on this issue, and they include the following as presented in the above incidents:

- the government’s stake lies in materials that may affect national security or government interest;
- the librarians’ stake manifests in the selection of materials within the library’s physical and financial constraints;
- library patron’s stake concerns restrictions placed on their access to knowledge through book bans;
- and the community’s stake emerges when their societal and religious values are not aligned with the materials available in the library.

Friction between these groups in the context of a censorship attempt demonstrated the power relations between them.

Another point that Foucault (1982) made was that “The exercise of power consists in guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome” (p. 789). This directly relates to how those in power can determine the knowledge available in the libraries, which in turn influences discourse. The Philippine censorship attempts in 2021 and 2022 targeted allegedly subversive materials. If the government actually

succeeded in censoring all those ‘radical’ materials and those on martial law, they could very well control the discourse on these topics and consequently control how society views the issues based solely on what materials are available for circulation. In the case of book challenges in the United States, persistent censorship campaigns by pressure groups are making librarians hesitate to acquire so-called controversial materials. Any form of censorship enforced in libraries controls discourse and prevents people from speaking about the censored topics, which is a direct opposition to intellectual freedom.

CONCLUSION

From within the spaces of the library, users set forth on a journey to find and create knowledge. Users can gain knowledge not only through perusing the available materials in the collection but also through the arrangement of the materials themselves (Radford, 1992). The arrangement of materials in the library provides insight into the library itself. The resources found in the library form a complex network with each other. The book is a system of references to other resources; “it is a node within a network” (Foucault, 1969/2002, p. 19). The continuity of discourse lies in referencing old texts, to which the library holds the key, and how they relate to each other and to the present. It is very much like how this paper attempted to explain censorship and intellectual freedom in libraries using Foucault’s concept despite it being written more than a decade ago. This paper contributes to the discourse of applying Foucault to the field of Library and Information Science.

The library is not just a place where knowledge may be found. It is also a place where knowledge is created. Libraries provide spaces for the continuous production of discourse which supports their mission to foster intellectual freedom. Despite the control that libraries have within their spaces through their policies, users have the freedom to read what they want and express themselves. Librarians have the responsibility to oppose censorship to allow users this freedom despite external pressures.

The discussion mainly focuses on the library’s physical spaces and physical collection. The dynamics of censorship and discourse in the digital landscape were not included. Other researchers may explore how information retrieval tools such as the online public access catalog could affect users’ access to materials. There is also the matter of database subscription access and discoverability.

Only a few studies tackle intellectual freedom in libraries here in the Philippines. Colleges and universities have their own policies on academic freedom, and some academic libraries have collection development policies that address or at least mention intellectual freedom (Icaonapo & Dar Juan, 2023). Overall, we lack a comprehensive policy on intellectual freedom for libraries aside from the brief mention of it in the Code of Ethics for Librarians and NCBSFL. It is recommended to have an overarching policy on intellectual freedom that can support libraries should censorship be attempted again in our country in the future.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

DECLARATION ON SOURCES OF FUNDING

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

DECLARATION ON USE OF GENERATIVE AI

The author did not use any generative AI tools during the preparation of this paper. All research, writing, and revisions are solely the work of the author.

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The PhJLIS is published by the School of Library and Information Studies, University of the Philippines Diliman. ISSN 2719-0471 (Online)