

# PUBLIC LIBRARIES FIGHTING DISINFORMATION:

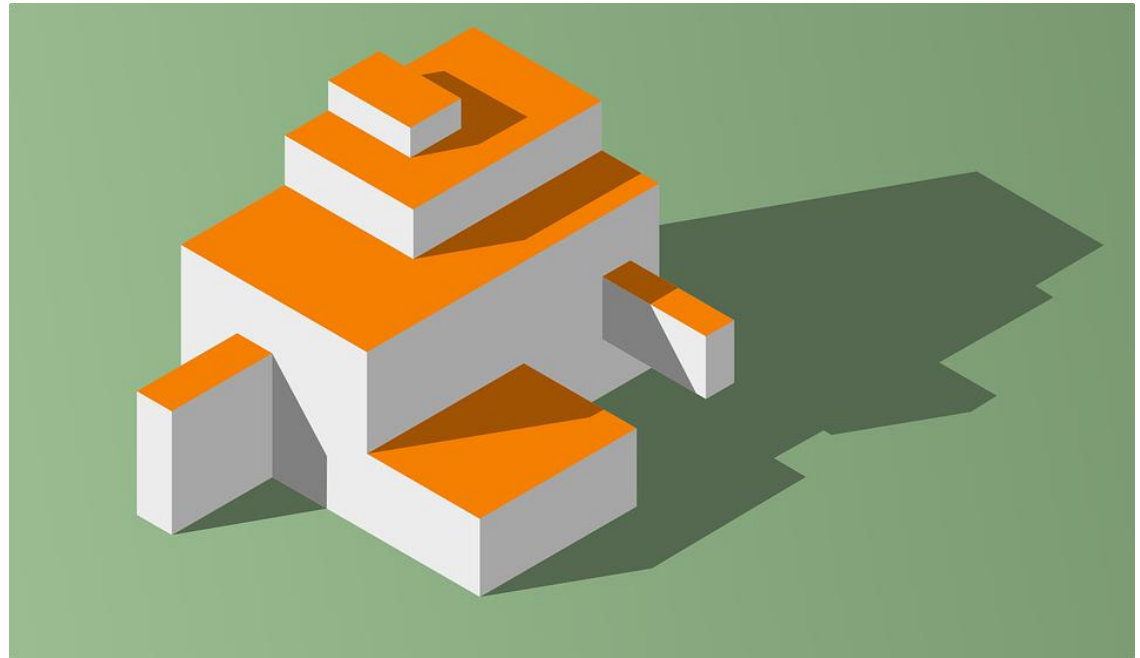
AN ANALYSIS OF KNOWLEDGE, RESOURCES, AND ACTIONS OF PORTUGUESE LIBRARIANS



Tatiana Sanches  
Carlos Lopes  
Maria Luz Antunes

# CONTENTS

- Why this study
- Context
- Methods
- Questionnaire Survey
- Results
- Conclusions



## WHY THIS STUDY?



Fake news, misinformation, and disinformation have proliferated in recent years, despite efforts to raise global awareness.

Information Literacy has proved to be an ally to combat this phenomenon...

- How do public librarians can tackle this issue?
- What kind of actions are being developed?

# CONTEXT



International  
Federation of  
Library  
Associations and  
Institutions



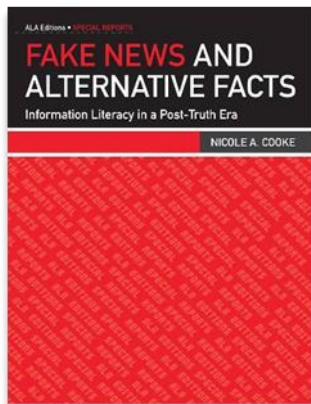
IFLA prepared a Declaration on Fake News in August 2018, which expressed deep concern about the disproportionate public impact that the phenomenon of fake news could have on freedom of expression and access to information. It makes clear that any restriction on this freedom, through censorship or blocking access to digital resources and the Internet, must be limited, which includes respecting the Manila Principle on the Responsibility of Intermediaries.

IFLA challenges governments to invest in information literacy and media literacy programs, as part of broader projects to achieve the education objectives of the UN 2030 Agenda.

# CONTEXT



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



**ALA** American  
Library  
Association



International organizations address the fight against disinformation through media and information literacy

A need for synergies between communication and information professionals in combating the obvious manipulation of public opinion on social media platforms (UNESCO, 2018)

ALA (2018) reaffirms the importance of combating all forms of distortion of informational truth, highlighting, among other combat strategies, the development of information literacy skills as tools for locating and validating information sources

ACRL (2018) highlights the importance of information literacy in combating disinformation, stating that training actions must be carried out to develop skills in evaluating information sources and for the development of critical thinking

# METHODS



- How the counteract against disinformation is being waged through the knowledge held, the resources allocated, and the actions and training strategies carried out by librarians of public libraries?
- Questionnaire (12 questions) send to public libraries by e-mail to the universe composed of 303 public libraries in Portugal
- A total of 70 libraries representing the following regions participated in this study: North (25.7%), Center (32.9%), Lisbon Metropolitan area (15.7%), Alentejo (8.6%), Algarve (11.4%), and Azores (5.7%) and Madeira (2.9%) islands.

# QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

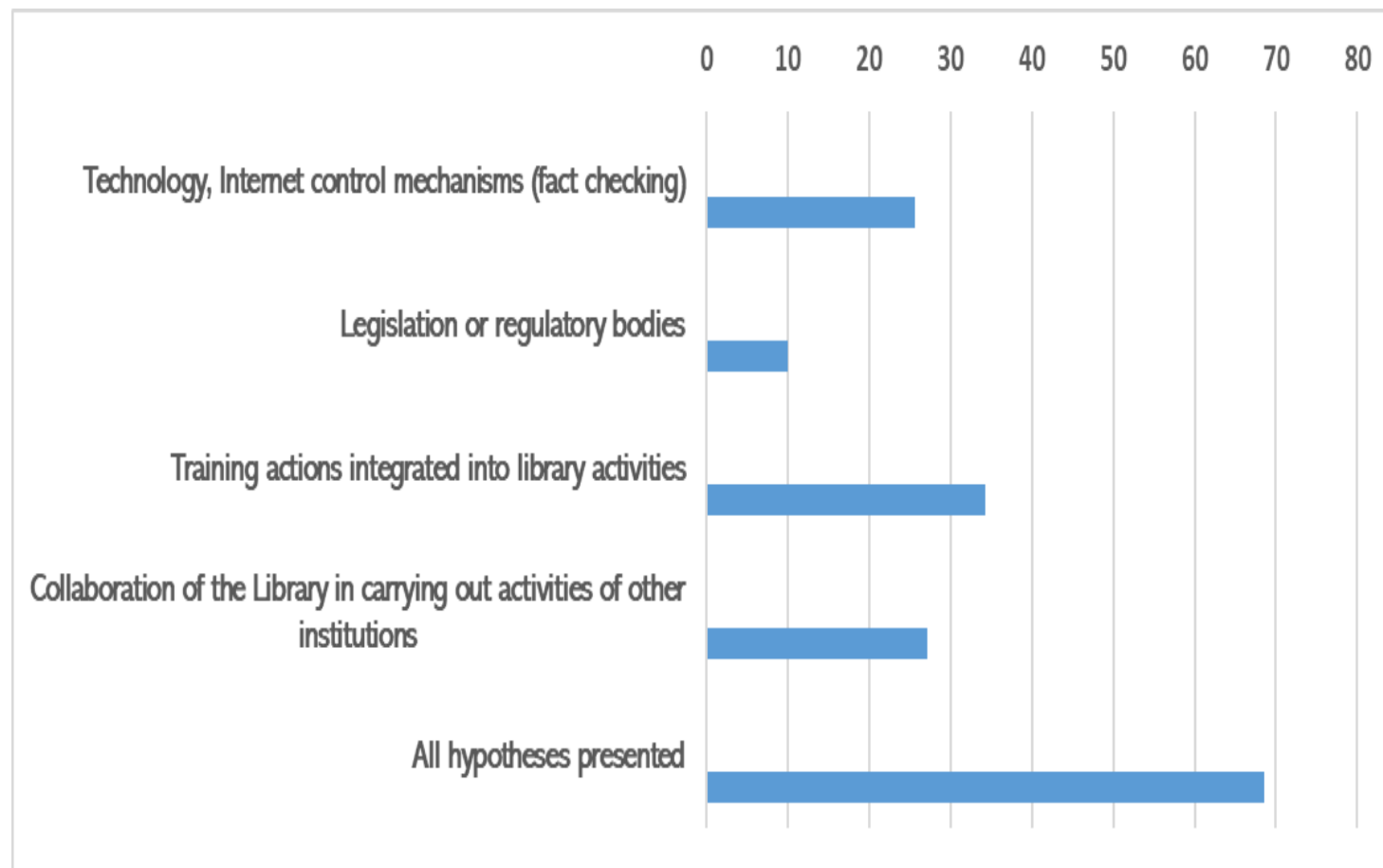
The questionnaire concerned the identification of the library; characterization of knowledge on the subject; and good practices in the counteract against disinformation. It was divided into four parts:

- an introduction, to clarify the content of the questionnaire to the respondents;
- a collection of socio-demographic data to identify the responding libraries;
- the core of the research, with nine questions; and
- an open question at the end, in case the respondent wants to leave a suggestion or opinion.



# RESULTS

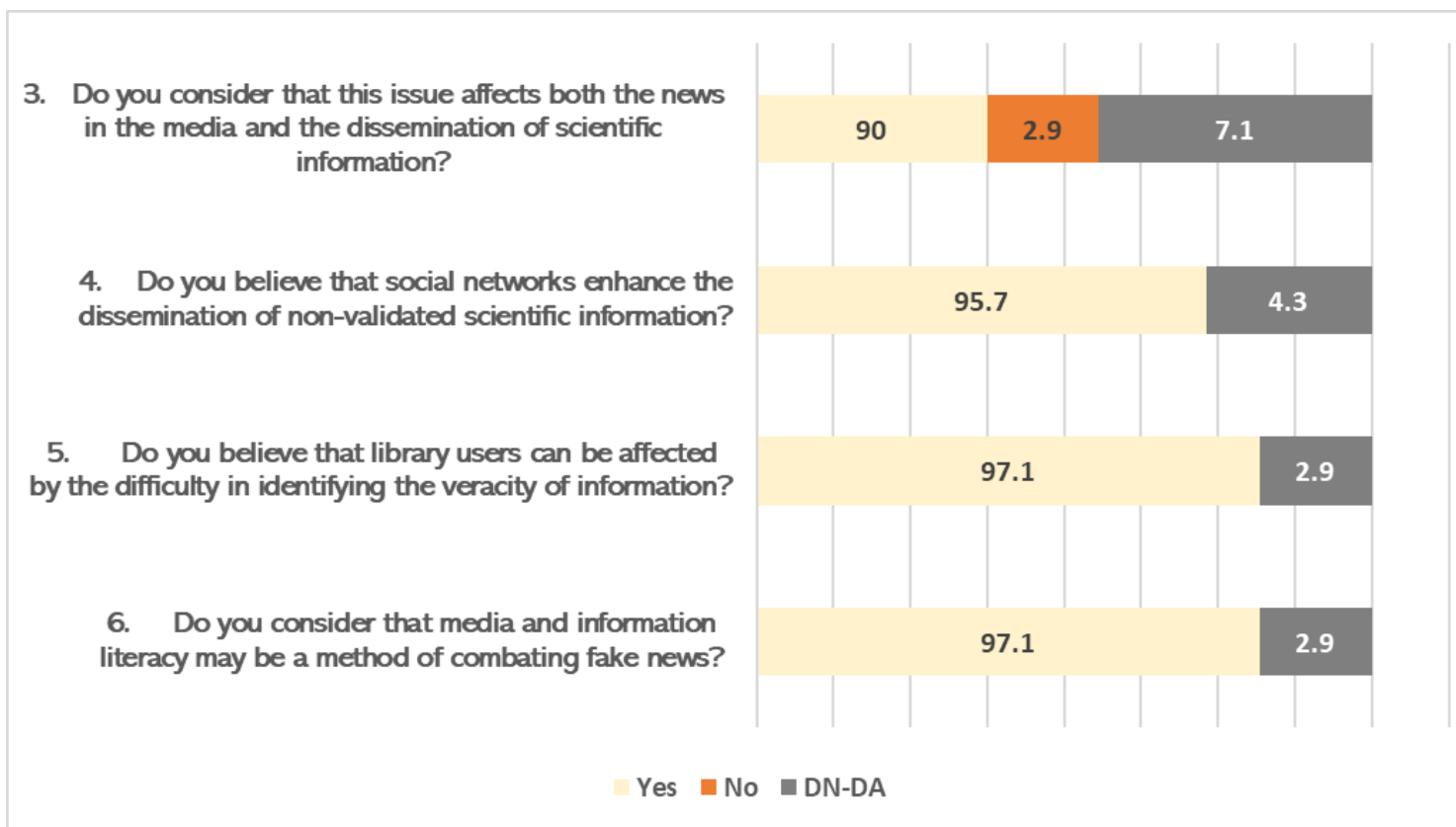
We ask public librarians  
**“What techniques or activities could be used to solve the phenomenon of disinformation?”**





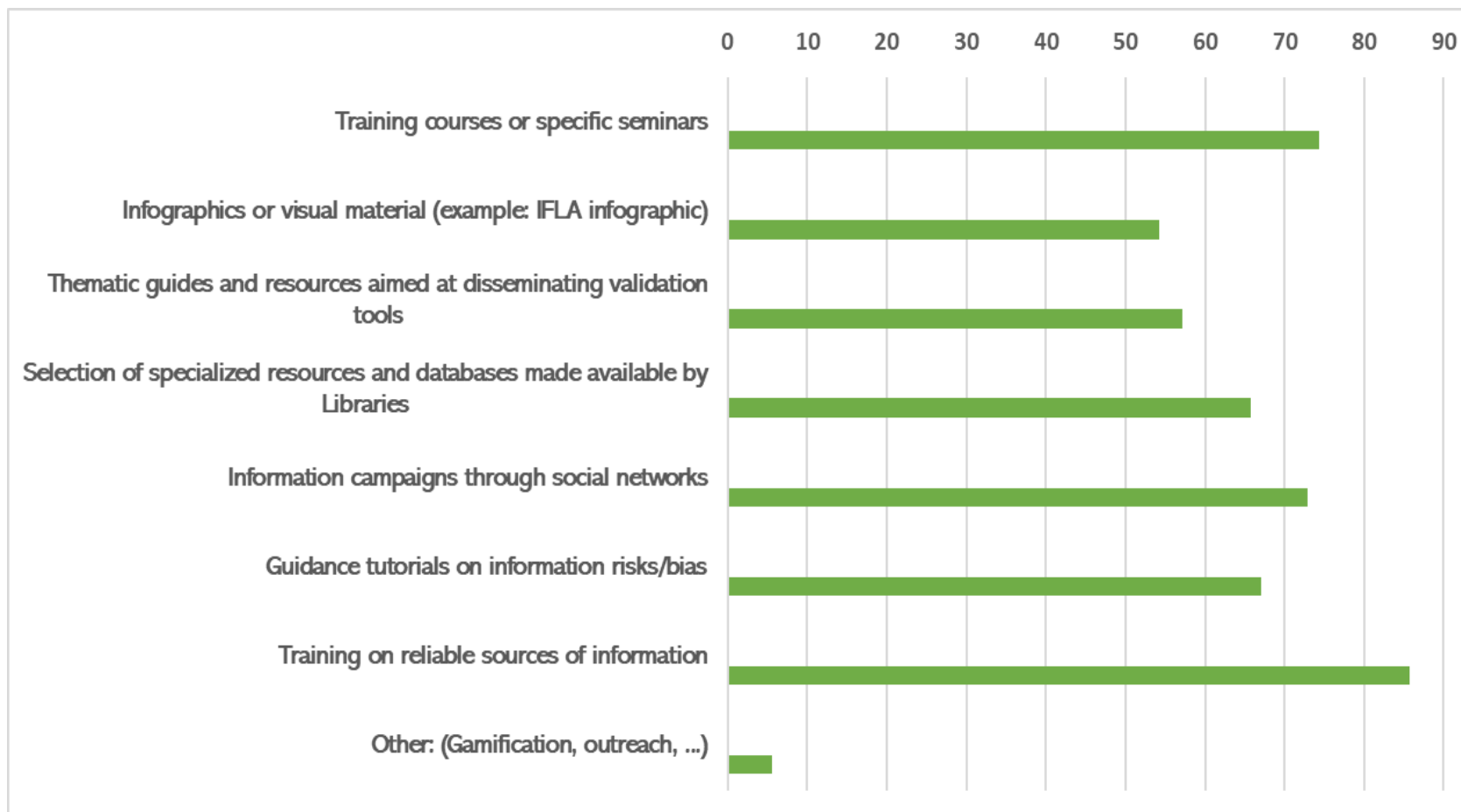
# RESULTS

They were then asked **opinion regarding the influence of disinformation.**



# RESULTS

They were also asked about **What media and information literacy resources should the Library make available to counteract disinformation?**



# RESULTS

In the open question about **how to develop this training for users**, the information professionals presented some ideas and strategies on how to ensure the effectiveness of the intervention

- (a) “It would be important that library and documentation managers but also technicians have training in this area”
- (b) “It is necessary to make available credible sources of information that counteract the hegemonic discourse”;
- (c) “The library must overcome the commonplaces and the univocal vision it carries, it must not reproduce it blindly and it must not be afraid of assuming itself as an alternative. Only then, through the library, the citizen can assume himself as a critical reader of reality in order to better transform it”;
- (d) “I believe it is important to have more media coverage through other public information services”; (e) “We would like to receive help on good practices to be adopted in this matter”; (f) “Collaboration with school libraries should be ensured”; and (g) “The library must responsibly accompany its users, thus ensuring their healthy growth as citizens”.

# CONCLUSIONS



The results show a consistent knowledge of librarians on the subject, but still **incipient actions to counteract disinformation.**

There is a pressing **need to carry out more targeted training** for these professionals, as well as to provide pedagogical resources and strategies to encourage learning among populations, which can contribute to achieving a culture of more attentive, integrated and critical citizens.

Concerning media and **information literacy initiatives**, must be valued; focusing on increasing skills in evaluating information sources; developing critical thinking to counteract disinformation, and enhancing citizenship and autonomy of individuals and their creative potential based on validated information literacy strategies, as previously mentioned in other studies.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ACRL (Association of College & Research Libraries)

American Embassy in Lisbon

BAD (Portuguese Association of Librarians, Archivists, Documentalists and Information Professionals)

Creative Designers: Ana Luísa Farinha, Diogo Sequeira

This work is financed by national funds from FCT – Foundation for Science and Technology under UIDB/04107/2020-Unidade de Investigação e Desenvolvimento em Educação e Formação, Instituto de Educação, Universidade de Lisboa.



TATIANA SANCHES | CARLOS LOPES | MARIA LUZ ANTUNES



THANK YOU!



European Conference on  
Information Literacy (ECIL)  
Krakow, Poland  
9-12 October 2023

