

Abstract: This study presents an information education proposal for Brazilian community libraries. The theoretical framework combines concepts of information education and info-education with the characteristics of community libraries and the educational potential of collective memory. The research is applied in nature, adopts a qualitative approach, and has exploratory-descriptive objectives. It was conducted as a case study with libraries belonging to Beabah!, the Community Library Network of Rio Grande do Sul, southern Brazil. The study examines how these libraries address disinformation and mobilise local collective memories in their practices. Based on the systematisation of the data, an information education proposal was developed in two phases: community study and information education actions. The first phase involves investigating the socio-cultural context of the community through bibliographic and documentary research, questionnaires, and interviews. The second phase comprises six action axes: cultural activities, training, social media, memory circles, exhibitions, and content production. The study argues that collective memories and lived experiences are key resources for countering misinformation and that libraries play a central role when their services are grounded in the local context.

Keywords: Collective memory; Community library; Disinformation; Information education.

Resumo: Este estudo apresenta uma proposta de educação em informação para bibliotecas comunitárias brasileiras. O referencial teórico combina conceitos de educação em informação e infoeducação com as características das bibliotecas comunitárias e o potencial educativo da memória coletiva. A pesquisa é de natureza aplicada, adota uma abordagem qualitativa e tem objetivos exploratório-descritivos. Foi realizada como um estudo de caso com bibliotecas pertencentes à Beabah!, a Rede de Bibliotecas Comunitárias do Rio Grande do Sul, sul do Brasil. O estudo examina como essas bibliotecas abordam a desinformação e mobilizam memórias coletivas locais em suas práticas. Com base na sistematização dos dados, foi desenvolvida uma proposta de educação em informação em duas fases: estudo comunitário e ações de educação em informação. A primeira fase envolve investigar o contexto sociocultural da comunidade por meio de pesquisa bibliográfica e documental, questionários e entrevistas. A segunda fase compreende seis eixos de ação: atividades culturais, capacitação, mídias sociais, rodas de memória, exposições e produção de conteúdo. O estudo argumenta que memórias coletivas e experiências vividas são recursos fundamentais para combater a desinformação e que as bibliotecas desempenham um papel central quando seus serviços estão fundamentados no contexto local.

Palavras-chave: Memória coletiva; Biblioteca comunitária; Desinformação; Educação em informação.

1. Introduction

This study proposes the intertwining of information education and the use of the local knowledge of peripheral communities, which is part of their collective memories, as strategies to combat disinformation. We present a proposal for information education and

the fight against disinformation, taking advantage of the locus of community libraries to promote and reflect on local collective memories.

Community libraries have strong local roots and serve underprivileged communities who are generally far from scientific discourse, have physical and technical difficulties in accessing information, but have abundant local knowledge and memories. Therefore, instead of just presenting these communities with strategies for dealing with information and guarding against disinformation based on scientific discourse, the proposal takes an alternative route: it proposes that community libraries encourage communities to reflect on their own life experiences, expressed in their collective memories, making them subjects of information processes.

A case study was carried out with libraries belonging to Beabah!, which is the Network of Community Libraries in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, located in southern Brazil. The research was based on observing these sites, identifying how community libraries act to combat disinformation and use local collective memories in their products and services. With this systematised data, a proposal was made for the information education initiative presented in this article.

Information education refers to training to relate to content and people; relationships that are made possible mainly through information and communication technologies today. It is an education that encourages the critical and creative use and production of information, as well as respectful, healthy and collaborative communication between people.

The notion of the role of collective memories in promoting information education is something that has been little studied, especially with the proposed focus, in which they not only contribute, but are the driving force behind its development, given the population it is intended to reach. This is because these populations are distant from scientific discourse, however, they are always inserted in contexts of memory sharing. The proliferation of disinformation today demonstrates the absence of strategies that promote education to appropriate information in a critical and healthy way.

Thus, the guiding question of the research is: how can the collective memories of peripheral communities be used to promote information education and combat disinformation? The aim of this research is to develop a proposal for information education and combating disinformation in community libraries, through the collective memories of local communities.

Experiences in information education are usually aimed at students and professionals, rarely reaching out to other social strata, such as citizens living in poor communities. Something is needed to fill the gap in actions aimed at this public, who can be one of the most vulnerable to misinformation due to the social and economic limitations they face. Our approach is innovative due to the object of study, as community libraries are a less traditional type of library and their products and services are still little explored in the Information Science literature.

Another justification for this proposal is the communities surveyed: the libraries are located in peripheral regions, where people with multiple needs live, who need to be prioritised by public policies. On the other hand, these are communities with local knowledge rich in memories and the construction of meanings that are often overlooked by scientific knowledge. This study represents the connection, respect and dialog between popular and

scientific knowledge. The research is relevant because it adopts a dialectical, social perspective and constitutes an open space for interaction and the construction of knowledge between the university, the community library and society.

The text is organised as follows: section 2 presents the theoretical framework that underpins the study; section 3 presents the methodological approach; section 4 presents the information education proposal for community libraries based on the memories of local communities; section 5 presents our final considerations.

2. Information education, infoeducation and community libraries

This study is set in a context of the dissemination of outdated, erroneous, or inaccurate information, characterised as disinformation, with the consequences of favouring or harming people or causes. Fake news has become such a worldwide problem that UNESCO (2016) argues that in order to combat it, people need to be literate so that they can create their own mechanisms to combat disinformation.

It is important to note that this “information disorder” (a term coined by Claire Wardle) manifests itself in different ways. Wardle (2019) uses three different terms to refer to disinformation: disinformation, when false information is shared with the aim of causing harm; misinformation, when there is no intention to cause harm, even though it is false information; and malinformation, when the information may be genuine, but is shared with the aim of causing harm.

Regarding the fight against disinformation, Heller, Jacobi and Borges (2020) reflect on its different types, such as the omission of the context in which the information is inserted, the excess of information and the biased news disseminated, to cite just three examples. In all cases, there are social implications resulting from the manipulation and distortion of reality.

In order to mitigate the damaging results of disinformation, an agenda of actions is needed. This includes changes to legislation, the definition of quality criteria for information and also news-checking mechanisms. However, one front that has not yet been worked on is citizen bias: citizen education that awakens an interest in knowing and wanting to resist disinformation (HELLER, JACOBI and BORGES, 2020). Effective action is needed to encourage the development of a critical sense among the population so that they know how to deal with the information they access better.

Information education is a set of actions aimed at promoting skills for searching for, appropriating and critically using information and building healthy communications between people (BRANDÃO, 2022). This perspective is in line with the concept of information competence, which involves knowing how to “[...] deal critically with available information and use it reflexively as a means of facilitating the creation of democratic spaces for access to rights, health, work and education for all” (SILVA, NUNES and TEIXEIRA, 2021:200). Information and communication form the basis of interpersonal relationships. In addition to information knowledge, it is necessary to think about dialogic, interactive and collaborative aspects.

The pedagogical approach of information education converges with memory, as it is based on promoting reflection on the world and people's position in it. This gives new meaning to the individual's relationship with information, since it places them as the protagonist: they are not the object that has to store content or even carry out information searches that are out of touch with their reality, but rather the agent who thinks about whether and why they need to learn something, what their responsibility is in relation to the use of information and who is interested in such use. "This is enthusiastic education, generated from a collective effort that occurs when there is an interest in others" (ZATTAR, BARBOSA and BORGES, 2024:7). This perspective is in line with pedagogical thinking, according to Landøy, Popa and Repanovici (2020:14):

[...] in contemporary pedagogical thinking, teaching should be related to a vision of learning as being an active, reflexive and conscientious student placed in a position to gather information and use it in different contexts, learning through action and reflection, by creating and solving problems, along with others.

Thus, information literacy does not refer to a simple instrumentalisation in terms of searching for or evaluating content, but to the training that goes into it, moving towards an understanding of the role of information and communication in the community and the opportunities for change based on memory and awareness of the subject's place in the world. This is an emerging theme and it usually focuses on school and university libraries, and there is little research or action in other types of libraries. This is a limiting factor because a large proportion of the population, especially the poorest, operate outside the educational circuit and do not use the services of these types of libraries.

This study proposes broadening the scope of these actions by focusing on community libraries, which stand out as a potential space for promoting information education. This is due to their strong roots in the communities where they are located, as well as the collaborative nature of their activities, developed by the community and for the community. They are organisations that represent social practices and sometimes comprise a reaction by the community itself to inequalities in access to information. Machado (2009:91) defines a community library as:

[...] a social project that aims to establish itself as an autonomous entity, without direct ties to government institutions, articulated with local public and private bodies, led by an organized group of people, with the common goal of expanding the community's access to information, reading and books, with a view to their social emancipation.

According to Soares *et al.* (2019), the idea of a community library should always be based on the preservation of popular culture, citizen political education, strengthening the local community, valuing the individual and their potential to transform society, guaranteeing the fundamental right to read and have access to information. For Alves (2020), community libraries are important as educational and cultural devices geared towards reading mediation, but also towards conscious citizen training and the development of local communities. In other words, they have a crucial commitment to promoting citizenship and the socio-cultural emancipation of vulnerable populations.

However, one challenge is the difficulty of reaching this population, understanding their needs, speaking their language and making the issue of disinformation something tangible and that represents a benefit for the community. This is because these communities usually face a series of social, cultural and financial difficulties, leading to a distancing from scientific knowledge.

The aim of this idea is to overcome this difficulty by exercising otherness and developing a problematising education that underpins “[...] creativity and stimulates true action and reflection on reality [...]” (FREIRE, 1979:42). We therefore propose a reverse path: to study the collective memories of this population, because, as Halbwachs (1990) postulated, whenever groups are formed, collective memories are built, which are kept alive in each of their members.

The concept of “collective memory” was proposed by Halbwachs (1990), who studied the social problems faced by a specific social stratum of his time: workers. For the author, there are as many ways of living and relating to material goods as there are social groups. These people share a “collective memory” responsible for ensuring the preservation of their ways of life.

At the forefront of a group's memory are the memories of events and experiences that concern the majority of its members and that result from their own lives or from their relations with the groups closest to them, those that were most frequently in contact with them (HALBWACHS, 1990:51).

Candau (2005), in his anthropology of memory, revisits Halbwachs' reflections, emphasising that “[...] what we call collective memory is often the product of a pile-up of very diverse memorial strata, and these sedimentary layers can be altered when memory is disturbed” (CANDAU, 2005:91, *emphasis added*). The author pays attention to a fundamental aspect of collective memory: the disturbances to which it is susceptible, including forgetting itself.

Concern about the games between remembering and forgetting led Nora (1993) to think about memory: the orality characteristic of traditional societies had the role of maintaining a “living memory”, passed down from generation to generation. This would be an “authentic” memory, as it would not require records to perpetuate it, but would remain alive in practices and knowledge. For the author:

Memory is life, always carried by living groups and, in this sense, it is in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to all uses and manipulations, susceptible to long latencies and sudden revitalizations (NORA, 1993:9).

Among the five propositions presented about the concept of social memory, Gondar (2016) highlights that it is the result of an ethical and political expression. In other words, the understanding we have of it and the very act of studying it is an ethical and political act. When we study the collective memories of a community, looking for elements to think about its identity and the way it relates to the information it accesses, we are adopting a stance of valuing this population, placing it as a protagonist, for example, in the fight against disinformation.

Furthermore, the territory where community libraries are located is central to the planning of their services (MASSONI, KAEFER and BORGES, 2024), and they are referred to in the literature as “territories of memory” (PRADO and MACHADO, 2008). This concept is used by the authors to define the community library as a territory of memory in the community where it is located, understanding this space as a centre of culture and local memory. Reflecting on this aspect, Massoni, Kaefer and Borges (2024) understand that it is the role of the community library to learn about the local histories of the inhabitants, the struggles for rights fought over time, as well as the marks and influences of the different ethnic-racial groups present in these territories.

We understand that is based on an epistemological change in the way we understand libraries in our society. Understanding the memories of the territories as a beacon for information education actions in libraries means rethinking the logic of knowledge production, which is usually thought of from the top down, with information flows that go from the center to the periphery and knowledge that comes from the holder of formal knowledge and is addressed to the ignorant.

Community libraries, as they have emerged and are organised in Brazil, are perhaps one of the best examples of what Perrotti (2016) calls the “Forum library”: a library that is better prepared to promote info-education, which is based on collaborative action between different actors, putting objectives, processes and procedures into dialogue, without diluting, subordinating or hierarchising them.

For Perotti (2016), info-education understands information as an essential category, an autonomous object and a formative experience in itself, not restricted to reflecting on the mastery of informational skills or procedures: its role is to mobilise knowledge of different kinds, questioning and challenging it, while at the same time relating it to the context of production, mediation and appropriation of knowledge and culture. In this sense, info-education proposes reflections on the very concepts of information and training, as well as the relationships between them.

Info-education is not about meaningless methodological skills and procedures or irrelevant content for the community: its aim is precisely to enable critical and creative appropriation of the information culture, with the subject having the autonomy to choose the paths they wish to take (PERROTTI, 2016). In addition to operational issues, info-education involves dimensions that relate to the context in which people live, as it encompasses political, ethical, cultural and emotional relationships, among others. Based on the paradigm of cultural appropriation, the Forum library emerges:

The devices of cultural mediation thus conceived model the bid of signs with expectations, interests, conditions, histories, experiences, cultural memory of the different audiences that act in them. On the other hand, by modelling, they also model themselves and necessarily acquire implicit or explicit formative dimensions. Instead of being a warehouse, the Cultural Forum therefore presents itself as a place for learning and negotiating meanings, for subjects to take affirmative action with and over signs, while at the same time appropriating knowledge that is indispensable for negotiations - informational knowledge (PERROTTI, 2016:21).

This respectful approach to the peripheral communities where community libraries are located can draw strength from the ecology of knowledge proposed by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2010). This concept understands knowledge as a manifestation and knowledge that emerges from social struggles through local experiences, which includes urban cultural practices that were previously seen as inferior, but which are now recognised as manifestations of knowledge.

Thus, the local memories of these communities would be the starting point for reflecting on their role as citizens, on the identity of the group, developing a critical sense for dealing with information and communication and thus using them not only to understand the world, but above all, to reflect and act for change. This would be a process of identifying what is important to the community and what its identity is, understanding memory as a form of self-knowledge, capable of recalling people's place in the world.

3. Methodological path

This research is applied in nature, uses a qualitative approach, and has an exploratory-descriptive objective, as it analyses how the libraries belonging to Beabah! develop information products and services based on the collective memories of the communities where they are located. The research universe consists of the 14 libraries that are part of the Beabah! Network, and the data collection procedures covered all of them.

As the project involved interaction with human participants, it was submitted to and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) through Plataforma Brasil, in accordance with the regulations in force for research with human beings in Brazil. The empirical work consisted of identifying and analysing the actions carried out by libraries that integrate information education, the fight against misinformation, and community collective memories, understanding libraries as living sociocultural spaces rooted in their local contexts.

Data collection was carried out through a documentary study and the application of an online questionnaire. The documentary study had as its corpus the publications made on the official profiles of the 14 libraries on the social network Instagram, considering the year 2023 as the time frame. All posts published during this period were collected directly from the institutional profiles, characterising them as digital public documents, without direct involvement of human participants.

Additionally, an unprecedented online questionnaire was administered, consisting of 17 open-ended questions, created on the Google Forms platform and sent by email to the managers of the 14 libraries of the Beabah! Network. The emails were sent at the beginning of June 2024, and responses were received until the second week of July of the same year. The inclusion criterion was holding the position of library manager, with participants under 18 years of age being excluded. Before starting the questionnaire, all respondents agreed to the Informed Consent Form. At the end of the data collection period, responses were obtained from representatives of eight libraries.

The questionnaire aimed to identify the strategies adopted by libraries to address the collective memories of the communities they serve, as well as services related to information literacy and combating misinformation. The data analysis was organised based

on pre-defined analytical categories, namely: a) general information about the libraries; b) information literacy and misinformation-combat services; c) the relationship between the services developed and the collective memories of local communities.

The data from the questionnaire, the document study, and the literature review were analysed in an integrated manner, serving as the basis for the development of the information education and misinformation combating proposal presented in section 4 of the article. The proposed activities were systematised into action plans, involving strategies aimed at engaging with communities, researching, valuing, and sharing their collective memories.

4. Information education proposal for community libraries

Active since 2008, Beabah! aims to bring together causes and projects that work to democratise and decentralise access to books, culture and education. The network understands reading as a human right and access to books as a way of achieving other fundamental rights for society, such as the right to information. It works on the peripheries of the territories, aiming to bring about social transformation and promote citizenship by interweaving education, in support of the public school system, and culture, with reading mediation, book loans, literary and cultural activities, as well as workshops and training.

It currently involves spaces located in seven cities in Rio Grande do Sul: Cachoeirinha, Canela, Canoas, Cidreira, Eldorado do Sul, Esteio and Porto Alegre. The collective is part of the National Network of Community Libraries (RNBC), taking part in national coordination with other local networks, which together total more than 120 community libraries spread across the peripheries of nine states.

Based on the documentary and empirical research carried out previously with the libraries in the Beabah! Network, it was possible to systematise the actions developed by the libraries that involve information education, combating disinformation and the collective memories of the communities in which they are located. The research was carried out through examining posts on the libraries' Instagram profiles, with a time frame of the year 2023. A total of 584 posts from 14 library profiles on the network were analysed. Our analysis sought to identify mentions of activities carried out by the libraries that are linked to the collective memories of local communities. To this end, the activities and information conveyed in the posts were observed, as well as the presence or absence of elements related to local culture.

Throughout the analysis, we identified indications that the local memories of the communities are being represented and/or addressed in reading mediation actions, memory/conversation circles, workshops, classes, meetings and moments of welcoming the community. Of the 14 profiles analysed, 10 had some kind of activity related to local memory in their posts. Through this research and the perception that collective memories are present in this context, we found evidence that memories are preserved and shared in the spaces for debate provided by community libraries, establishing an even greater link between libraries and communities.

The aim of all these questionnaires was to develop a proposal for information education and combating disinformation for community libraries, through the collective memories of local communities. This proposal is presented in Chart 1.

Chart 1 – Proposal for Information Education for Community Libraries

Phase 1 – Community Study	
Bibliographic and documentary research on the community. Application of questionnaires and individual and collective interviews with local residents and key people in the community. Focus: information needs of the community; identification of misinformation about the community or commonly disseminated in or about it; the collective memories of the community, the aspects that mark the local identity, the community leaders, the socially shared stories, the challenges faced on a daily basis, the desires of the local population etc. The product of this phase is the selection of themes, personalities and issues to make up phase 2.	
Phase 2 – Information education actions	
Axis	Actions
Axis 1 Cultural actions	Reading mediation, shared readings, storytelling and other artistic-cultural activities that focus on the memory of the community. Local books and productions should be prioritised.
Axis 2 Training	Workshops, lectures, tutoring, courses, training and hackathons. Guidelines for accessing safe and reliable websites. The focus should be on identifying misinformation, developing participants' critical thinking when dealing with information, and fact-checking. Tools for detecting fake news.
Axis 3 Social media	Posts that deal with local history and facts of importance to the community. Testimonials from people in the community can be recorded and published or carried out in the format of online live podcasts. Dissemination of books and local productions.
Axis 4 Memory circle	Mediation of chats and debates on important topics with the community, focusing on its history and the challenges faced by the collective. Explore the experiences and worldviews of people and the group as a whole.
Axis 5 Exhibitions	Promotion of physical exhibitions or on social networks about the memories of the community and the themes that are important to the collective. Examples of misinformation about the community can also be addressed.
Axis 6 Content production and publication	Research, production and publication of content about the memories of the community, such as books, newspaper articles, etc.

Source: Prepared by the authors, 2024.

It is important to note that all the proposed actions, like any information service, can be targeted at specific groups in the community, segmented according to their information needs and profiles. Segmenting the community served is a valid alternative, especially in the case of Brazilian libraries, which lack financial resources and must carefully plan which

services to invest in (MASSONI, 2014). Some specific groups can be addressed, such as the elderly, children, young people, women, members of the LGBTQIAP+ community, etc. according to the aim or objective of each action.

Likewise, the actions can include discussions on contemporary social issues, especially those of interest to the community. Examples include racism, ethnic-racial relations, machismo, bullying, gender equality, citizenship, mental health, abuse of various kinds, LGBTphobia, environmental education, land reform, the fight for decent housing and public policies, access to education, etc. These discussions are fundamentally linked to Brazilian community libraries, which are committed to promoting citizenship.

One strategy that can be adopted to facilitate the implementation of actions and maximise the reach of activities is to partner with local public schools and other organisations working in the community, whether governmental or not. These entities can help publicise the activities and also serve as a space for debates with the community.

Another alternative is to seek partnerships with local universities, which can help with specialised knowledge and even use the library as a space for learning, study and a laboratory for the academic activities it develops. In the Brazilian case, libraries can seek a partnership with the Library Science courses offered by federal universities, given that there are courses that address information education and related topics in their curricula. This is what is advocated by Borges, Massoni and Martini (2023:14):

Librarians need to be instigated and sensitized about the importance of information education and about their own role as educators. This necessarily involves training to help them reflect on and practice the subject, which includes outreach activities, contact with research and also subjects that address information competence.

This proposal was designed to systematise the information education activities carried out in Brazilian community libraries. It is a proposal that can be implemented in whole or in parts, according to the context of each library and the territory where it is located. Similarly, due to the financial difficulties faced by this type of library, one alternative is to write a specific proposal for the library and implement it, or have it ready to be submitted to any public and private agency calls for proposals.

Regardless of how libraries use this proposal, the only elements that cannot be missing are the presence of the community in co-authoring the actions developed, their protagonism and respect for their shared memories. These are the pillars for the development of information education in Brazilian community libraries. In this sense, we share the principles of info-education:

[...] info-education is not guided by principles that understand learning as a simple act of assimilating ways of doing things, methodological strategies and procedures or the mechanical incorporation of content. For it, learning is the affirmative activity of subjects with regard to knowledge, signs and meanings; it is the production of knowledge in living, dynamic interlocations with culture, the world, others and oneself; it is a movement that mobilizes multiple aspects of learners and the environments in which they find themselves (PERROTTI, 2016:12).

The managers of these libraries are expected to be prepared and sensitive to understanding the value of socially shared knowledge in the community and the importance of strengthening the self-esteem of the territory where they operate. It is hoped that this proposal will instigate the people who live in the communities served by the libraries to develop skills to identify omitted content in the information they access, compare different sources of information, observe the interests and sponsors of the media that broadcast information, among other skills. Reflecting on their own life history and that of the community in which they live will help them understand their place in the world and how to intervene in it. Only in this way will it be possible to develop the effectively critical and reflective information education that is desired.

5. *Final considerations*

Information education is a strategy for preventing disinformation that acts on the reception, understanding and conscious use of information, focusing on the people who access the information, namely citizens. This proposal, when combined with public policies, legislation and actions that seek to curb disinformation and reduce its danger, can contribute to a more critical society that is less subject to the danger of disinformation.

The proposal presented here aims to enable people to look to their own life stories and collective experiences to find the truths to counteract the fanciful or mistaken discourses they may come across. Libraries are central to this concept, but only if they accept the challenge of planning their services based on a study of the socio-cultural context and history of the populations located in the territories where they operate.

Because of their characteristics, community libraries are a privileged space for developing such activities, as they look to their surroundings to provide the support, they need to make their actions more dynamic. We hope that this proposal can help develop the activities of these libraries, as well as other types of libraries (public libraries, school libraries, etc.), so that they can be effectively understood as spaces for education, social transformation and the promotion of information and education.

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