Critical digital literacy in the libraries for persons from different socio-cultural milieux (empowerment)

Panel B1- Zurich
21.10.21, 13h30 - 14h15
Panel suggested by Arjun Sanyal
Reporter: Marian Clemens Manz

Discussion leader and core topic presentation :
Inspired by ideas and concepts of Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire concerning critical pedagogy the question arose how critical digital literacy can be improved further to step up to digital poverty, which became especially apparent through the pandemic, and hegemonic structures in research publishing. This very concept of critical digital pedagogy informs the whole process of critical information literacy and formed the basis for the discussion round.

The discussion was led by Arjun Sanyal, Assistant Librarian at Central University of Himachal Pradesh, who also prepared a lot of input to his experiences of the situation in India.

Main arguments of the discussion:
Critical digital literacy is not only about teaching to use digital tools, but also to be able to interrogate the production and infrastructure of the information production process.

The whole process of critical digital literacy within the broader process of critical information literacy is meant to conscientize the students and concerned audience to the inherent hegemonic power structures within the information resources and inspire them towards interrogating these power structures.

There is the need to raise awareness through instruction sessions at the educational institutions. But not only students have to be considered, but also the locals in the affected areas.

Open Access and publishing possibilities are still a problem, especially for the poorer southern areas of the world. Science journals have big traditions, mostly dominated by certain western countries. Digitizing and spreading information is easily possible nowadays but licenses and copyrights, often supported by certain lobbies, prevent the use of scientific content for people outside a certain social status.

The whole process of critical digital literacy is a self-reflexive process that is ultimately aimed at creation of a democratic and participatory scholarly communication process.

Proposed Solutions:

To address these issues the global north and south must work closer together. New knowledge sources are needed which are pushing the current boundaries in research.

Why not making own DH journals which are open globally and start thinking beyond outside of the traditional threshold. Also, there must be found a way how copyright and licenses can be loosened for certain cases. (Maybe the acknowledged use for pre-literature and Micropublications, which often are already very close to the published version, could help.)

Literature on the topic:

T. D. Hall (2020). Ending Information Redlining
https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2020/11/02/ending-information-redlining/

S. H. Ranganathan (1956). Open Access in library 1. Social functions of library
http://nopr.niscair.res.in/handle/123456789/28570

S. H. Ranganathan (1956). Open access in library 2 Definition, scope & Humanistic value
http://nopr.niscair.res.in/handle/123456789/28579

A. Sanyal and T. Stanley (2019). Experiences from a programme of professional development in Wales – A time well spent
https://www.sconul.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Arjun%20Sanyal-Tracey%20Stanley%20FOCUS%2071.pdf

A. Sancal et al. (2019). An unforgettably intriguing and an enriching learning experience: Report of a study visit to the German National Library, Frankfurt am Main, Germany, from 8th -12th april, 2019.
https://media02.culturebase.org/data/docs-bideutschland/DNB%20report%20for%20BII_Sanyal.pdf