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 Politics of Libraries III: Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Intersectionality in LIS
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Indicators of Truly Epic Post-ness: Information Literacy, Authority, and the Contemporary
 Political Podcasting Ecosystem

[SLIDE 1]

[Intro preamble]

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In the fall of 2020, I undertook a directed study course overseen by Dr. Michael McNally at the University of Alberta with the broad goal of historicizing information literacy where we would read some of its pivotal documents — Paul G. Zurkowski’s *The Information Service Environment: Relationships and Priorities* from 1974, the Presidential Committee on Information Literacy’s *Final Report* from 1989 and its *A Progress Report on Information Literacy* from 1998, the ACRL’s 2000 *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* and 2015 *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* — alongside writing from critical information literacy and theorizations of the “post-industrial” society. I felt intuitively that there must have been some connection between this new literacy’s emergence, the Global North’s economic shift to the “post-industrial” (or service) society/economy, and latter twentieth-century librarianship’s search for professional jurisdiction and, therefore, legitimation by academia, government, and society at large.

Early on in our meetings, however, and in our discussions about information literacy’s significant documents, I found that Dr. McNally and I repeatedly returned to difficult questions of authority: who decides what is authoritative information, particularly in the contemporary moment where digital networked media infrastructure has enabled instant self-publishing and widespread dissemination of information? For example, is an Instagram or Facebook Live stream from a firsthand participant in Portland’s “autonomous zone” in fall 2020 more “authoritative” than a *Portland Tribune* story from later the same day about roughly the same events and period? Are these even comparable media artifacts, engaging, as they do, such different modalities? From a post-secondary pedagogical standpoint, how do we help students assess authority in a dynamic media environment without falling back on rote checklist-based analyses of indicators of authority that we know, themselves, reflect exclusionary and oppressive regimes of othering and systemic disenfranchisement — that is to say, when we know that certain types of gender, racial, and economic privilege have allowed only certain types of people (often white, cishet, male) to become credentialed and, therefore, “authoritative” within specific fields of specialization?

I came to what are, I think, some generative conclusions in my work for that course, some of which I will share in this presentation. But my goal for today is also to push beyond my thinking in that directed study.

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This is because on 6 January 2021, roughly a month after finishing my course (and my MLIS), the Capitol insurrection took place, sending shockwaves across the globe, proliferating striking visual imagery — who will ever be able to forget Jake Angeli, the “QAnon Shaman”’s tattoos, fur, and horns? — and fully mainstreaming the conspiracist phenomenon QAnon, whose followers had been instrumental in fomenting and carrying out the storming. Fresh from my course, I couldn’t help but think about authority questions in relation to QAnon and the contemporary political podcasting ecosystem which was attempting to come to grips with the day’s events. In particular, I thought immediately of the commentators at *QAnon Anonymous*, an independent investigative podcast that had been tracking QAnon for over two years.

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This presentation will be comprised of the following sections, which I hope will structure our thinking together across some dense, conceptual terrain:

1. Information Literacy’s Zurkowskian Origins
2. The ACRL *Framework*’s Authority Frame and Its Reception
3. A Survey of Contemporary Responses to QAnon from within Library and Information Studies
4. QAnon’s Appropriation of Information Literacy
5. Lessons from *QAnon Anonymous* and Liquid Authority in the Contemporary Political Podcasting Ecosystem/Conclusion

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1. Information Literacy’s Zurkowskian Origins

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The timeline of information literacy’s initial coinage, increasing discursive proliferation, and eventual widespread adoption across LIS roughly tracks with the neoliberal turn in the West and neoliberalism’s ensuing ascent to hegemonic “common-sense” ideology as described by Stuart Hall and Alan O’Shea. Paul G. Zurkowski, then-president of the Information Industry Association of America, is frequently cited as having coined information literacy in 1974 in a white paper entitled *The Information Service Environment: Relationships and Priorities* and produced for the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science.

In this paper, Zurkowski deterministically assumes as given a society-wide condition (indebted to Daniel Bell’s theorization of the post-industrial society) of “overabundance of information ... [that] exceeds our capacity to evaluate it” (1), which, in turn, “requir[es] retraining of the whole population” (1) and “establishing a major national program to achieve information literacy by [the ambitious timeline of] 1984” (27).

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Zurkowski defines “information literates” as “[p]eople trained in the application of information resources to their work” who “have learned techniques and skills for utilizing the wide range of information tools as well as primary sources in molding information solutions to their problems” (6).

The Zurkowskian definition of information literacy is fundamentally skills-based, mechanistic, and reflective of neoliberalism’s instrumentalization of higher education: “Zurkowski defined information literacy as a job skill, pointing to the ostensible need for trained workers ... in a professional context. Information literacy was defined as a discrete set of skills that a student could obtain much like any other consumer good in the higher education setting and then transport to a job in this new economic world” (Drabinski 482). As Karen Nicholson identifies, Zurkowski’s understanding of information literacy also establishes a close connection between this new literacy, the commodification of information, and neoliberal economic reforms via his own later articulation that “information literacy skill development [is] a critical stepping stone in the creation of wealth, a key element in the blueprint for our national economic recovery” (qtd. in Nicholson, “On the Space/Time of Information Literacy” 17).

Notably and crucially absent from Zurkowski’s founding definition of information literacy is *any* conceptual notion of authority, credibility, or expertise on which the newly information literate subjectivity can depend when searching for, retrieving, and evaluating information. This is striking when we consider that it is, after all, the thoroughly Bellian “overabundance of information ... [that] exceeds our capacity to evaluate it” (1) that Zurkowski asserts at the outset as the motivating factor for the coinage of this new literacy and consequent ten-year reskilling of the American population.

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Zurkowski’s prologue section opens with a hastily sketched phenomenological account of information in which he states, “[i]nformation is not knowledge; it is concepts or ideas which enter a person’s field of perception, are evaluated and assimilated reinforcing or changing the individual’s concept of reality and/or ability to act” (1). The act of evaluation thus plays a pivotal role in Zurkowski’s definition of information, yet it is itself elided throughout his argument for this important new literacy.

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The only section of *The Information Service Environment: Relationships and Priorities* that does gesture, however indirectly, to questions relevant to authority is found late in the report when Zurkowski argues against government subsidization of publishing and library services: “A concomitant of freedom of expression is the need of the user to have confidence in the information source on which he [sic] proposes to rely. Subsidization of activities that pre-empt alternative sources eliminates one base for confidence: [c]ompetition among products delivering concepts and ideas” (25). In this excerpt, consumer “confidence” stands in for complex issues of authority, revealing Zurkowski’s thoroughly Smithian belief in the invisible hand of unfettered capitalism as the guarantor of quality information products winning out in a competitive marketplace of ideas. As I will demonstrate in what follows, Zurkowski’s authority lacuna has

had deleterious effects in LIS that persist into contemporary debates around the ACRL Framework, particularly its first frame, “Authority Is Constructed and Contextual.”

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2. The ACRL *Framework*'s Authority Frame and Its Reception

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Since its initial drafting process, the ACRL *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* has been met with a wide range of responses, from discussions of threshold concept theory (Townsend et al.), to metaliteracy (Fulkerson et al.), to its practical utility as a document for evaluating students (Oakleaf). A quick search for the *Framework* in LIS' disciplinary databases yields 365 hits in Library & Information Science Source and 376 hits in Library & Information Science Abstracts. The discourse around the *Framework* has even led to what has been deemed “*Framework* freakout” (Farkas) and “*Framework* fatigue” (Seeber 158), reflecting the impassioned but also exhausting reception of the document by academic librarians.

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The divisive reception of the *Framework* — particularly its first frame, “Authority Is Constructed and Contextual”¹ — is its own object lesson in the widely variant interpretation of written text. On one hand, the *Framework* has been critiqued as a social constructionist, absolute relativist document that “reduce[s] all truth claims to ‘power-plays’” (Rinne 55). On another hand, others — particularly critics from critical LIS and critical information literacy — have read it as a fundamentally conservative document “essentially describing normative academic research and knowledge practices” (Battista et al. 117) that fails to fully commit to explicitly emancipatory social justice aims, remaining “conflicted, internally contradictory, and ambivalent ... specifically in its understanding of power relations and standards” (Seale, “Enlightenment, Neoliberalism, and Information Literacy” 82).

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Stefanie R. Bluemle has provided what is perhaps the most rigorous reading of the authority frame published to date. In it, she identifies what she terms “a fundamental contradiction within the frame’s definition of authority” (275): “Authority cannot be ‘constructed and contextual,’ or understood in the ... sense [according to LIS scholar Patrick Wilson] of being a ‘type of influence recognized or exerted within a community,’ and also have inherent qualities—yet that is exactly what the frame says. The frame posits a definition of authority on which it does not entirely follow through” (275). For Bluemle, this contradiction essentially allows for the critiques sketched above to be lodged simultaneously against the authority frame. Nathan Rinne, uneasy with the frame’s social constructionism, can over-read it — missing authority’s inherent qualities, and, therefore, Bluemle’s contradiction — and trashing the *Framework* as a relativist morass. In contrast, Andrew Battista et al. see the frame’s social constructionism as indicative of the half measures of liberal incrementalism and fixate instead on authority’s inherent qualities,

¹ Hereafter referred to simply as the authority frame.

the acknowledgement of which, to them, represents the residue of “normative academic research and knowledge practices” that the *Framework* is unable or unwilling to disavow.

Bluemle’s contradiction, therefore, indexes a fundamental tension within information literacy instruction in the contemporary university. Rote source evaluation, indebted to 2000’s *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* and often comprising a (residually print-based) mechanistic analysis of a source’s indicators of authority — symbols or guarantors, we might say, of an author’s membership in communities of “normative academic research and knowledge practices” (Battista et al. 117) — has been exhaustively critiqued as insufficiently nuanced to account for both the diversity of online information sources (Meola) and, more importantly, the entrance of differently authoritative voices² into the scholarly conversation (Seale, “Information Literacy Standards and the Politics of Knowledge Production” 227-228). These critiques push back against what Bluemle identifies as authority’s “inherent qualities,” or may problematize the possibility of authority “inhering” in a source or author in the first place. The *Framework*’s social constructionism can be seen as a corrective to this notion of “inherent qualities,” and the mechanistic, exclusionary effects of pedagogues’ and practitioners’ uncritical assumption of them.

At the same time, however, contemporary information literacy pedagogy can be seen as a kind of superstructure built on top of the credential-granting/professionalizing apparatus of higher education as reshaped according to neoliberalism’s dictates and from which learners hope to graduate with their *own* indicator of authority. Upon graduation, learners practically *require* that this indicator retain its value when traded in the professional marketplace.³ (In fact, nowhere is this more acutely felt than in the field of librarianship, itself, where, invariably, proper librarian job ads will begin their list of requirements with “Master’s Degree in Library Science from an ALA accredited library school.”)

The paradox of critical information literacy, therefore, is that learners are encouraged to question traditional indicators of authority — to problematize them as representing “inherent qualities” and, ideally in doing so, to realize their own burgeoning authority or latent agency over the course of their education — only to have this emancipatory work ultimately deflated upon graduation to yet another symbol traded in the professional marketplace. Ultimately, as I came to conclude during my directed study course with Dr. McNally, a truly critical information literacy would thus have to include the university *itself* in its systemic analysis of authority’s production, and might require a serious reexamination of how authority is produced, sold, and communicated society-wide.

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So, to recap, across these first two sections:

² For critical information literacy pedagogues, these differently authoritative voices crucially include those of learners themselves as they are aided to realize their own burgeoning authority (Angell and Tewell 100).

³ In sociology there is an entire subfield exploring issues related to what is termed “educational credentialism.” See, for example, Brown.

We have seen that information literacy's Zurkowskian origins are strikingly mute on complex issues of authority, credibility, and expertise despite the role played by evaluation in Zurkowski's phenomenological definition of information. The Zurkowskian account of information and its foundational ideas have persisted through information literacy's pivotal documents: 1989's *Final Report* by the Presidential Committee on Information Literacy, 1998's *A Progress Report on Information Literacy* by the same committee, 2000's *ACRL Standards*, and, most recently, 2016's *ACRL Framework*. These ideas have furnished us with the present problems around authority that we see playing out in the discipline, as we have awkwardly attempted to graft social constructionist nuance onto a neoliberal conception of information for which central questions of authority were, at best, taken care of by the market's invisible hand, and, at worst, merely an afterthought. It has been no wonder that authority has been such challenging terrain for information literacy, given that its founding document barely even acknowledges it, and, when it does, does so indirectly and by papering over its complex issues with market solutionism.

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3. A Survey of Contemporary Responses to QAnon from within Library and Information Studies

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In the wake of the unexpected election of Donald Trump to the United States presidency in 2016 and the mainstreaming of conversations around fake news, “alternative facts,” misinformation, and disinformation, battle cries were sounded within librarianship for library workers to enlist in the intensifying “information war.” Headlines proliferated — “The Fight against Fake News Is Putting Librarians on the Front Line – and They Say They’re Ready” (from the *Christian Science Monitor*), “In the War on Fake News, School Librarians Have a Huge Role to Play” (*The Verge*), “How Libraries Are Reinventing Themselves To Fight Fake News” (*Forbes*) — and the ALA and Libraries Unlimited published primers like Nicole A. Cooke's *Fake News and Alternative Facts: Information Literacy in a Post-Truth Era* and Denise E. Agosto's edited volume *Information Literacy and Libraries in the Age of Fake News*.

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My own decision to attend library school coincided with this period and I recall writing an impassioned essay in our introductory course at the University of Alberta about the urgent need for librarians to address the fake news problem, perhaps even going so far as to forge alliances with journalists who — themselves in the throes of their own profession-wide existential crisis — were returning to the brass tacks of fact-checking

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(with a figure like Daniel Dale, for example — formerly of the *Toronto Star* and now with *CNN* — essentially making a career of live-tweeting his vetting of every single one of President Trump's utterances to ... debately-effective or meaningful ends).

Largely speaking, LIS' treatment of QAnon has fallen in line with its earlier responses to fake news, seeing the group as indicative of a grave threat to consensus reality and liberal democracy, and librarians as *the* optimally-disposed agents with the necessary skillset to intervene.

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Paul T. Jaeger and Natalie Greene Taylor, in a recent piece advocating for the development of what they term “lifelong information literacy” to combat online misinformation, provide an example of this commonly-held view:

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critical information literacy is now a survival skill for both individuals and for democratic societies. Libraries, as the socially designated providers of access to information and accompanying literacy, are better positioned than any other institution to equip people with evolving skills that they need to remain information literate throughout the course of their lives. ... libraries ... stand as the only institution in society that is devoted to promoting comprehensive information literacy, encompassing foundational literacies through digital and media literacies to critical information literacy. (22-23)

In their piece, Jaeger and Greene Taylor are critical of the concentration of information literacy instructional efforts in the academic library sphere and also of what they characterize as an uncoordinated response to misinformation that has duplicated effort through the creation of similar pathfinders and tools, “none reflecting the combined expertise of types of libraries across the field” (23). They admonish all libraries to embrace their role as arsenals of information literacy, “teaching and reinforcing information literacy to all users at every opportunity” (26). Though Jaeger and Greene Taylor are certainly well-intentioned and make strong points in this article — such as their critique of the redundancy of the labour involved to produce hundreds of near identical fake news libguides and pathfinders — I find this piece perhaps most useful as an index of the (undeniably self-interested) rhetorical urgency employed by those in LIS in the contemporary sociotechnical moment.

Nefarious technologists and their algorithms, foreign agents, bots, bad faith actors and exploitative grifters are illustrative of an ever-evolving, increasingly-polluted information ecosystem, deceiving the atomized patron subjectivity at potentially every turn, thus necessitating individual hypervigilance, and — conveniently for librarians concerned for job security and cultural relevance — the learning (and constant refreshing) of a battery of information literacy skills that we, as professionals, have to revise to keep pace in the “information war.” It is this type of urgency that leads Jaeger and Greene Taylor to exhort, with missionary zeal, that *all* libraries teach information literacy to *every* user at *every* opportunity, an admittedly enviable ideal that in reality can only be set-up to fail.

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Jorge Revez and Luis Corujo’s literature review of 27 studies from the past two years exhibiting library practices undertaken to combat fake news finds that, in line with Jaeger and Greene Taylor’s critique, “most studies emphasize academic libraries[’] practices and are mainly focused on information literacy instruction” (8). They summarize, “[t]he current debate [in the literature] is around strategies that intend to reiterate . . . authority-based source evaluation [itself fraught with many of the issues I discussed above in this presentation’s first two sections] versus the challenge to recognize an emotional-based [by this I think they mean affective] reaction to fake news in a post-truth world” (8). To me, Revez and Corujo’s finding tracks with LIS’ late-coming (but still necessary) acknowledgement of affect in information seeking and evaluation as scholars and practitioners work to undo the discipline’s deep-seated positivism and naive belief in the unerringly rational, liberal humanist subject.

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One of the rare LIS papers to engage with Q at considerable length is Stephanie Beene and Katie Greer’s “A Call to Action for Librarians: Countering Conspiracy Theories in the Age of QAnon.” In it, the authors summarize the conspiracist phenomenon before suggesting that information literacy instruction librarians shift their thinking away from heuristics (such as the CRAAP test) to consider the role that critical thinking, analytical reasoning, metacognition, and affect play in evaluating information. Beene and Greer also emphasize that LIS has much to learn from conspiracy research in psychology, the social and biological sciences, articulating that librarians “[a]rmed with . . . knowledge of the psychology of conspiracy thinking . . . can build better tools and techniques into information literacy instruction and interactions with patrons” (5).

“Are librarians prepared for interacting with QAnon adherents, and what might those interactions look like?” (3), Beene and Greer ask. Similarly, Revez and Corujo earnestly (and somewhat ominously) pose, “[a]re librarians ready to intervene in patrons’ cognitive sphere[s]?” (1). The idea that I would like to gently push back against today that is common to these formulations is the assumed centrality of librarians and their actions to these issues. Put simply, it may very well be that QAnon adherents *are* not and would rarely, if ever, be our patrons, rendering Beene and Greer’s advice on how to have a respectful face-to-face interaction with a Qpilled patron — “[i]t is important to monitor your verbal and facial cues, as well as body language, which may inadvertently communicate a defensive posture” (5) — well-meant but largely point-missing.

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4. QAnon’s Appropriation of Information Literacy

Why would QAnon adherents, according to my understanding, generally not be library patrons, and, even if they were, would not be compelled to be high users of reference services in ways that Beene and Greer assume (and from which they feel adequately-prepared librarians could hope to intervene for the epistemic better)? I think there are two answers to this, which I will detail below.

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Beene and Greer actually touch on the first reason, though they hedge it in a deeply unhelpful conditional formulation endemic to mainstream LIS discourse whenever it veers too closely towards what it perceives to be “political” territory. As they say late in their piece, “[i]t might help to remember that feelings of powerlessness during crises may have led to a loss of trust in established institutions, including universities and libraries” (6). Revising the authors’ hesitancy here, I think we can assert more emphatically that this “loss of trust” *has* happened and a conspiracist phenomenon like QAnon indexes the severity of this loss and its distressing fallout.

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For example, reporter Adrienne LaFrance found, in her interviews with QAnon adherents for *The Atlantic* in 2020, that some individuals were spending “four to six hours a day reading and rereading Q drops, scouring documents online, [and] taking notes” (“The Prophecies of Q”), none of which, it bears underlining here, involved the direct intermediary role of an information professional. Whether they avoid consulting librarians for ideological reasons — seeing us as similar to mainstream journalists in obfuscating the evil doings of the elite globalist cabal, both our advisory services and collections development decisions necessarily compromised as a result — or out of the sheer convenience of (and feelings of empowerment that accompany) online search — a user tendency that LIS has been bemoaning since search engines’ early days through to the Googlization of everything — or some combination of the two, in many ways QAnon evinces the complete peripherality (even arguable *redundancy*) of mainstream librarianship to contemporary information politics. This makes the profession’s collective decision to urgently seize upon it (and the fake news phenomenon more broadly over the last five years) deeply ironic, as the *exact* moment in which we are to prove our hyper-relevance to the present crisis, fractured reality, imperiled democratic norms, etc, as “arsenals of information literacy” (to quote Jaeger and Greene Taylor), is *precisely* the moment in which we are most glaringly absent from the picture.

The second reason why QAnon adherents are not library patrons is closely related to the first, being, arguably just an expansion of my first reason. I think that perhaps the most chastening reason that QAnon adherents do not frequent libraries and utilize their services is that they have appropriated information literacy wholesale themselves, operationalizing it according to their conspiracist worldview.

What exactly do I mean by this?

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Writing presciently in 2018, technology and social media scholar danah boyd cautioned against what she identified as television network RT (formerly Russia Today) and other groups “weaponizing critical thinking” by sowing discord through urging viewers to “Question More” about hot-button issues like climate change and terrorism.

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Echoing boyd, Robert Berkman, writing recently in *Online Searcher*, notes that groups like QAnon have “weaponized” media literacy:

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it’s worth noting that the critical-thinking principles ... —“Do Your Own Research,” “Don’t Take Anything for Granted,” and “Make Up Your Own Mind”—are the actual tenets of ... QAnon. The group advises its members of the importance of doing one’s own research to discover what is ‘really’ going on and not relying on a mass media that is complicit with the elite powers that be. (11)

[SLIDES 29-30]

Indeed, as Matthew Hannah identifies in *First Monday*, “[i]n an ironic twist on conventional representations of QAnon advocates being uneducated rubes, they are actively exhorted to deduce and decode clues correctly and archive information as they research breadcrumbs, *practicing a strange kind of information literacy*” (“QAnon and the Information Dark Age,” emphasis added).

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Sarah Hartman-Caverly, in the ALA edited volume *Libraries Promoting Reflective Dialogue in a Time of Political Polarization*, has written the most intellectually rigorous Q piece from an LIS perspective, which I have saved to discuss for this section. In her “‘TRUTH Always Wins’: Dispatches from the Information War,” she adapts the Grounded Theory Online Ethnographic Process to understand the information culture of the QAnon virtual community centered (at that time) around the image board 8chan, “lurking” the Q research forum and even eventually participating directly in a collaborative research thread with other anons. Instead of relying on secondary sources like all other LIS treatments of Q to date do, Hartman-Caverly’s participant-observation methodology furnishes her with novel insights into the information behaviours of the QAnon community.

Adding depth to Hannah’s above contention that QAnon advocates practice “a strange kind of information literacy,” what Hartman-Caverly finds is that they have, essentially, established their own highly-complex localized practices for researching, vetting, amalgamating, and canonizing information. She notes,

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Participants in the QAnon ... conspiracy community engage with a broad range of information sources, using sophisticated techniques to synthesize and communicate their findings. In any given thread one can find links to stories from multiple establishment newspapers of record, clips from broadcast and cable news, [U.S. Securities and

Exchange Commission] filings and public records of financial transactions, government reports, statutes and regulations, patents, academic papers, live hearings, interviews and expert witness testimonies, indictments and other court filings, sacred texts and esoterica

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... Pursuant to the themes of the conspiracy, anons collaboratively maintain a deep time line of political intrigue, compile lists of newsworthy resignations in the public and private sectors, follow law enforcement actions to thwart human trafficking, track the purchase and sale of stock by executives at major corporations, and count sealed federal indictments. Diggers take deep dives into the public record to report back biographical and historical findings of note, some draw network maps and time lines of associations between entities and events of interest, anons with coding skills develop post aggregators and searchable dashboards, and those with talent in digital artistry design images and iconography for memes. Claims posted without supporting information are flagged as opinions or met with demands for “sauce,” wordplay for source. (189)

Here are a few examples of the word “sauce” [source] being used on the Canadian QAnon Research Board:

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► **Anonymous** 01/13/19 (Sun) 01:59:22 ID: 380ad3 () No. 4731807

>>4727224

What is this some garbage photo? 8Chan requires sauce newbie

► **Anonymous** Mar 5th 2019, 02:45:37 AM (MDT) ID: 25ce3f (5) No. 5516185

ANONS, PLEASE SAUCE YOUR DIGS

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► **Anonymous** Dec 26th 2019, 06:19:44 PM (MDT) ID: **be3fcc** (5) No. 7628391 >>7651317 >>7651352 >>7651361
 File (hide): [34c412db32c8b1....jpeg](#) (86 KB, 255 x 240, File (hide): [e13f8eaac8b071....jpg](#) (103 KB, 255 x 200, File (hide): [a01543524063ff....jpg](#) (110 KB, 160 x 255, 1000 : 943, [04b9469d4b55b7....jpeg](#)) (h) 764 : 599, [Canadian Prime....jpg](#)) (h) 828 : 1323, [IMG_20191003_2....jpg](#)) (h)

Harper gave special treatment to the Clinton Foundation.

No doubt during the G8 summit.
 Harper is a globalist shill.

Sauce (from 2010)

<<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/amp/news/politics/ottawa-gives-bill-clinton-foundation-special-designation/article4348910/>

► **Anonymous** 01/25/20 (Sat) 09:19:39 ID: **ea556e** (403) No.7910216
 File (hide): [d4e372b4353c6a3...jpg](#) (11.21 KB, 254x255, 254:255, [cf21a74b88c29c14cedb3e0b0d....jpg](#)) (h) (u)



>>7907006
 >>7906963

Def worth digging on this anons. Have any more sauce on this ?

Disclaimer: this post and the subject matter and contents thereof - text, media, or otherwise - do not necessarily reflect the views of the 8kun administration.

Further exploration of the way that “sauce” connotes and functions on Q research boards would require a much deeper dive than I have time for here. A scrape of Q boards in order to analyze the types of links that anons share — which, as Hartman-Caverly identifies, are *wildly* varied — would undoubtedly be illuminating and reflect the multifariousness of online information sources.

As the first two images shown illustrate, the requirement “to sauce” is a practice that more seasoned anons use to initiate newer anons into the collaborative research process. The third image — the link from *The Globe and Mail* ostensibly establishing former prime minister Stephen Harper’s ties to the Clintons (and, therefore, their sundry misdeeds within the Q universe) — demonstrates how a mainstream media “sauce” can forge a connection that the conspiracist mind then reads deeper or against the grain. After all, the *TGAM* article simply reports on the William J. Clinton Foundation receiving a different charitable designation in Canada in 2010, but, slotted into the Qpilled mindset, it takes on a chilling new resonance via its indirect signaling of darker knowledge only available to the initiated, Q information literate reader. In this way, though QAnon has been characterized as Trump-like in its suspicion of and disdain for any mainstream media and conventional journalistic authority (Zuckerman 5),

mainstream journalistic sources can *still* function within the Q research ecosystem as texts on which anons can perform these paranoid talmudic readings.

Finally, as the fourth image evinces, “sauce” is also treated as a kind of raw material on which the anons perform “digs.” One anon’s “sauce” to back up a claim can thus launch new threads of inquiry, themselves needing to be “sauced,” creating a kind of recursive collaborative fiction or live action role play.

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Hartman-Caverly concludes,

The anons have established a virtual community of practice around shared information behaviors, standards, and values, encompassing a research library, an identity management mechanism, and a format for publishing findings utilizing open source tools, open access information, and uncompensated crowdsourced research labor. What makes them conspiracy theorists is not their [quoting Cass Sunstein and Adrian Vermeule’s work on conspiracy theorists] crippled epistemologies, but their differential hermeneutics. (189-190)

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As one can hopefully sense from these excerpts, Hartman-Caverly’s piece is a brave, needed documentation of the QAnon community’s *actual* information practices at a specific time. Hers is also an account in which she manages to register her discomfort as a daytime academic librarian moonlighting in a decidedly taboo information ecosystem (the 8chan image board) and observing its users near *complete* estrangement from conventional notions of authority, attribution, academic integrity, rights permissions, etc.

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This is an estrangement that becomes most clear, as I have hoped to demonstrate, in the QAnon community’s wholesale appropriation of information literacy discourse, encouraging users to “question the narrative,” “do [their] own research,” “make up [their] own mind,” “go to the source,” “SAUCE YOUR DIGS,” etc.

Hartman-Caverly questions late in her piece, “as librarians, what do we really know about the contemporary information environment?” (205). The answer, I think if we’re entirely honest, is: very little.

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5. Lessons from *QAnon Anonymous* and Liquid Authority in the Contemporary Political Podcasting Ecosystem

I recognize that my last section could strike those in LIS as defeatist, and I have struggled with how to proceed here without sounding a falsely cheery message. The truth is that there are significant problems with how contemporary librarianship chooses to approach a phenomenon like QAnon, the foremost of which being, I think, that we assume we have far more agency than we do in reality. We need to professionally acknowledge and, above all, *hold* the sense of our own peripherality or irrelevance that I think the QAnon phenomenon creates in us, and only then can we constructively begin to plot next steps to better address the problems endemic to the contemporary information environment.

There *are* examples to look to in the culture, however, that have engaged with the QAnon phenomenon more usefully than contemporary LIS, and it is here that I would like to turn to the political podcasting ecosystem before closing.

[SLIDE 40]

In the democratized domain of podcasting, a creator — who may to some degree be university educated but perhaps downwardly mobile — can pick an esoteric cultural phenomenon (such as Q) and do a “deep dive” on it, providing commentary on and analysis of it irreplicable by the broad, generalist purview of legacy media (to the extent that it even still exists) and reaching a far wider audience than academics. But is the self-made Q “expert” a journalist or professor, as we have traditionally understood authority? Not exactly. This dynamic fascinates me because the sustained, deep dive analysis common to the podcast medium is what I feel personally is needed here, far more than mainstream media histrionics about, in Q’s case, “domestic terrorism,” paywalled scholarly journal articles on it that will be published in two years that only other scholars will read, or librarianship’s own self-interested handwringing about democracy’s death.

[SLIDE 41]

The *QAnon Anonymous* (*QAA*) podcast, in particular, provides an interesting complication to this entire discussion. Launched in 2018 and currently generating around \$76,000 CAD a month from roughly 13,300 patrons on Patreon,

The *QAnon Anonymous* Podcast chops & screws the best conspiracy theories of the post-truth era. Your hosts Jake [Rockatansky], Julian [Feeld], and Travis [View] dredge up wild beliefs from online fever swamps, engage QAnon followers in irregular warfare, and trip over deranged historical facts that make conspiracy theories sound sane. (“QAnon Anonymous”)

QAA has released over 250 episodes across its non-paywalled and paywalled feeds, covering Q from almost every angle imaginable: from a deep dive on Q-themed music culture (premium episode 43) to the New Age to QAnon pipeline (episode 94), first-hand reporting from a QAnon rally in Tampa, Florida (episode 74) to QAnon after Trump (episode 131).

Broadly speaking, what distinguishes the *QAA* approach from the LIS approach to QAnon?

[SLIDE 42]

- *QAA* engaged earlier with the phenomenon (beginning in August 2018).
- *QAA* engages continuously with the phenomenon (over 250 episodes and counting).
- *QAA* exhibits greater fluency with the phenomenon, its lore, and what is at stake when discussing it.
- *QAA* considers QAnon adherents more holistically, including creating episodes devoted to listener-submitted real-life accounts of the conspiracist mindset taking hold in friends and family (premium “Listener Stories” series).
- *QAA* understands the phenomenon more diachronically, connecting it to a lineage of conspiracist thinking in America. For example, the podcast has done a premium episode comparing QAnon to Millerism, a nineteenth-century American movement that believed the Second Advent of Jesus Christ would occur in the mid-1840s (premium episode 50).

[SLIDE 43]

So, to conclude, taking the QAnon phenomenon as an example as I have done here, we have a case of a conspiracist belief system where “authority” accrues to the Q source precisely because of its anonymity and its complete lack of affiliation with legacy (“fake news”) media, which, at this point in the Trump and post-Trump eras, is a well-known formulation. What’s more, as I demonstrated, within the QAnon conspiracist mindset, Qpilled followers have appropriated Information Literacy discourse *exactly* concurrent with LIS’ prescription of it over the past five years as *the* panacea for society’s pervasive information woes.

But then the twist, to me, is that the *best* analysis of this type of phenomenon comes from a source that is, itself, outside of the traditional economy of authority (as described by LIS’ Information Literacy *Standards* and *Framework*).

An entire, highly-fragmented, chaotic media ecosystem has developed online for which LIS has only imprecise conceptual tools. Despite our best rhetorical efforts strategically centering us and our profession in these debates, I think and fear we will only become increasingly peripheral to them the longer we neglect to genuinely revise our thinking in light of them.

[SLIDES 44-50]

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