



Theoretical Framework for Equitable Knowledge Distribution in an Era of Informational Disparity

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Abstract:

In recent years information itself has become an essential means for social, educational, economic and cultural progress. However, due to the rapid progress in information technology, information inequality has become a serious problem. Due to rural-urban gap, economic disparity, gender discrimination and lack of digital literacy, it is not possible for everyone to get equal information. Or in this background the concept of knowledge and justice becomes especially important. Gyan Nyaya means making information and knowledge available to all based on the principles of social justice, equality and inclusion. Reading rooms and information centers should not be considered only as sources of knowledge but as a means to achieve social justice. Despite extensive research on information inequality and digital divide, there has been no attempt to develop a theoretical model based on knowledge justice. The purpose of this amendment is to analyze information inequality, clarify the concept of knowledge justice and suggest a theoretical model based on knowledge justice for the library and information science field. The proposed model includes five dimensions namely entry justice, representation justice, participation justice, promotion justice and policy justice.

Keywords: Knowledge Justice, Information Inequality, Digital Divide, Library and Information Science, Social Justice, Democratization of Information, Theoretical Model.

Introduction:

Information is positioned as a vital resource for advancement in the social, educational, cultural, and economic domains in the twenty-first century. The potential for information access has increased dramatically due to the dynamics of globalization, digitization, and the quick development of information and communication technologies (ICT). Ironically, this development has made the long-standing problem of information inequality worse at the same time. Inequitable information distribution is hindered by socioeconomic status, gender, digital literacy levels, urban-rural disparities, and innate

structural impediments (van Dijk, 2020). The idea of knowledge justice assumes crucial significance in this situation. Based on the principles of social justice, equity, and inclusion, this idea promotes the equitable and inclusive dissemination of knowledge and information. Access, Representation, Participation, Preservation, and Policy Justice are its five fundamental elements, which go beyond availability.

Libraries and information centers serve as active promoters of social justice in addition to being repositories of knowledge. They are the main tools used to democratize information. As a result, it is crucial to

incorporate the Knowledge Justice principle within Library and Information Science (LIS).

Scholarly research on Knowledge Justice is still lacking, nevertheless. Although a lot of study has been done on the digital divide and information inequality (Norris, 2001), few studies have offered thorough theoretical frameworks to direct the fair distribution of knowledge and information.

Literature Review:

1. Inequality of Information:

Information inequality is the inequality in the availability, use, and control of information and technology. This concept is nearly related to the digital divide (Norris, 2001). Although information technology has expanded rapidly, its benefits have not been shared equally by all segments of society. According to some scholars, information often works in such a way that it empowers the wealthy while further marginalizing the disadvantaged.

2. Knowledge Justice:

The main goal of this is the:

- Providing equal access to information for all.
- Ensuring representation of diverse social groups in the knowledge system.
- Respecting and acknowledging the knowledge held by disadvantaged communities.
- Preserving local and cultural knowledge flows.

This framework asserts that information is not just a tool for economic or educational advancement, but a fundamental resource for building a just and equitable society.

3. The Role of LIS in Fostering Knowledge Justice:

The central mission of libraries is to ensure universal access to information. The

field has pursued this through initiatives like the Open Access movement, Information Literacy Programs, digital repositories, and advocacy for sustainable information policies (Suber, 2019).

Globally, concepts such as digital libraries, smart libraries, and community-centric libraries are gaining traction. Nonetheless, these initiatives often fail to fully integrate the broader social principles underpinning Knowledge Justice.

Research Problem & Objectives:

1. Research Problem:

This imbalance goes deeper than just who can get online; it also involves whose stories and knowledge are included, who gets to contribute, and what information is saved for the future. Very often, the valuable insights and experiences of minority or less powerful communities are missing from the common sources of information we use. Therefore, the issue is twofold: it's not just about unfair access, but also about a fundamental unfairness in how knowledge itself is produced and recognized.

While the field of Library and Information Science holds great potential for making knowledge available to everyone, there hasn't been enough deep research or real-world use of the Knowledge Justice framework within it. This clear shortage highlights the urgent requirement for a strong, well-defined model based on Knowledge Justice to effectively tackle and reduce information inequality.

2. Objectives:

The primary objectives of this study are:

- To perform a comprehensive analysis of the concept of Information Inequality.

- To investigate the concept of Knowledge Justice and elucidate its relationship with the LIS field.
- To propose a Theoretical Model grounded in Knowledge Justice to mitigate information inequality.
- To provide recommendations for policy reforms and practical changes within the LIS domain.

Theoretical Framework & Proposed Model:

1. Theoretical Framework:

The concept of Knowledge Justice is founded on the values of equity, inclusion, participation, and social justice (West, 2019). This framework operates on several core assumptions:

- Information is not merely a technical or economic asset but a instrument for social justice.
- Information Inequality is a multifaceted issue rooted not just in digital access but also in cultural, social, and representational disparities.
- Libraries and information centers are foundational institutions for the democratization of knowledge. From this foundation, a Knowledge Justice-based LIS model is constructed to serve as a guide for reducing information inequality.

2. Proposed Model of Knowledge Justice in LIS:

This model is structured around five interconnected dimensions:

2.1 Access Justice: Ensuring all societal groups have equal opportunity to find out and access the information. This involves bridging the rural-urban divide, guaranteeing accessibility for people with disabilities, and eliminating financial barriers.

2.2 Representation Justice: In this, adding the experiences, knowledge and perspectives

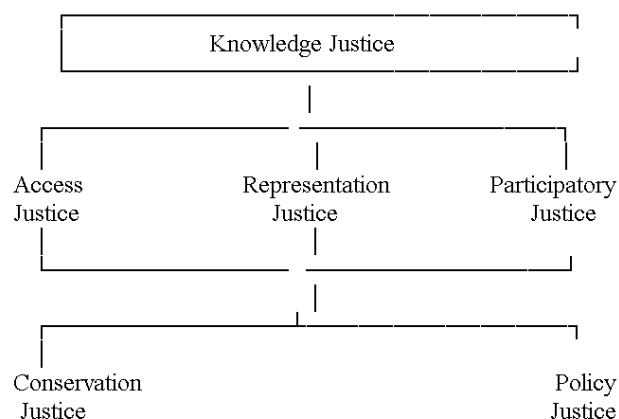
of disadvantaged and small groups within information sources

2.3 Participatory Justice: This can be achieved by promoting open knowledge initiatives, community-based museums and citizen science projects.

2.4 Conservation Justice: This can ensure that the knowledge of minority and tribal communities is safely passed on to future generations.

2.5 Policy Justice: This includes institutional support for open data, open access and effective information literacy programmes.

3. Conceptual Representation of the Model:



This model shows that all five dimensions are interconnected and together they are essential for reducing information asymmetry and achieving Knowledge Justice in LIS.

The model can be visualized as a system where **Knowledge Justice** is the central goal, supported and achieved through the synergistic functioning of its five pillars: Access Justice, Representation Justice, Participatory Justice, Conservation Justice, and Policy Justice. These dimensions are interdependent; progress in one area reinforces and enables progress in the others.

Conclusion:

This model can play an important role in preserving the value of equity and inclusion in the knowledge system at the local and

global levels. In the future, if experimental studies, innovative service initiatives, and equitable information policies based on this are implemented, libraries can be transformed into more sustainable, responsible, and socially oriented institutions. Thus, this research effort is not limited to theoretical discussions but also inspires practical action.

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