Information Pollution, a Mounting Threat: Internet a Major Causality

Ramesh Pandita *

Central Library
BGSB University, India
E-mail: rameshpandita90@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The present discourse lasts around, information pollution, causes and concerns of information pollution, internet as a major causality and how it affects the decision making ability of an individual. As, information producers in the process to not to lose the readership of their content, and to cater the information requirements of both the electronic and the print readers, reproduce almost the whole of the printed information in digital form as well. Abundant literature is also equally produced in electronic format only, thereon, sharing this information on hundreds of social networking sites, like, Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, Flicker, Digg, LinkedIn, etc. without attributions to original authors, have created almost a mess of this whole information produced and disseminated. Accordingly, the study discusses about the sources of information pollution, the aspects of unstructured information along with plagiarism. Towards the end of the paper stress has been laid on information literacy, as how it can prove handy in addressing the issue with some measures, which can help in regulating the behaviour of information producers.

Keywords: Information, Information Pollution (IP), Internet, WWW, Social Media, Print & Electronic Document

1. INTRODUCTION

On day-to-day basis, people consume information acquired from different sources, be they formal or informal, printed or electronic, online or offline, word of mouth or an issued undertaking on a variety of subjects, mostly concerning to education, health, business, news, entertainment, religion, philosophy and many

more. The worrying aspect is, consumers of information hardly look for the authenticity of the information they consume, which otherwise may be polluted to a greater degree and in many ways. Morrison & Stein (1999) in their study, while viewing their concerns about the information pollution, observed that more than 20% of all the future jobs will be involved in locating, assessing and checking the authenticity of the information to be consumed, and thereafter same shall be provided for consumption. Harris (1999) while highlighting the role and importance of information argues that information serves as the foundation in our lookout in understanding the world, be it by thinking, judgment or through our belief system.

People are very much familiar with the pollutions associated with, air, noise, soil, water etc., which are very common. Humans could not timely realize the importance of protecting different kinds of ecologies and environments as such have started suffering on these accounts. Now the irony is, the situation has reached to the stage, that despite putting in all possible efforts humans are unable to reverse this effect completely. Accordingly, information pollution is very much in existence for a quite long now, but it is the consumers of information, who have not yet realized the pollution associated with it and the worrying aspect here again is, by the time people will realize the need and importance of pollution free information, things may again slip out of our hands and the situation may again become irreversible.

The question arises, what is pollution free information or the other way round what does authentic or reliable information mean? If we look at the dictionary meaning of the word "authentic", it means "genuine, true, real, veritable, what is not false, or uncontaminated. Availability or provision of the right kind of information means, what is free from false or misrepresentation of facts and trustworthy, which is supported by evidence. Authentic also means, what is vested with authority, having a legal validity, which is verifiable to establish its genuineness. In legal terms "authentic" means credible, competent, and reliable with all necessary formalities required.

In the present discourse attempt has been made to assess the different aspects and facets of 'Information Pollution' and the role of the web in furthering it, especially the way social media has come into force to deliver and regulate the information dissemination techniques among netizens. The younger generation in the age group of 15-35 years are more vulnerable to this menace, as it is these people who most of the time remain hanged to the internet, of course not by choice every time but out of compulsion as well, given their job requirements. The Internet has definitely helped us to cut across the space and time constraint, but at the same time, the worrying part is mishandling of technology, whereby the same technological blessing has begun to turn into a curse.

2. INFORMATION AS A RESOURCE

Importance of Information as one of the greatest resource in the human life can be gauged from various facts. Be it about the transition of human life from wanderers to settle ones, from hunters and food gatherers to food growers and to cover these phases of life, it is the information, which has come to the rescue of early man. By accumulating information and converting it into knowledge. Humans developed sense for accumulation of information on various aspects of life and the continuous and constant propagation of same to the coming generations has led us to be known as present day men of science and technology, what we often dub as an information society.

Information has refined the course of life to leaps and bounds; this as a result has replaced the age old concept of division of the world on the basis of wealth to the division of the world on the basis of accumulation & exploitation of information. Polarization of the world on the basis of 'Information Rich' and' Information Poor' countries has itself become a decisive factor, which has led countries to be distinguished as developed and developing countries. The accumulation of information is not an end in itself, what is more important is to exploit this information to its optimum for the welfare and betterment of society. Need is to put more emphasis on the production, handling, organization, dissemination, usage and exploitation of quality information, given this fact, no force on earth can deprive a country from becoming economically rich, thereby unfolding the economic attributes of information.

3. INFORMATION POLLUTION

In the modern times, it was Dr. Paek-Jae-Cho, former CEO cum president of Korean Telecommunication Corp. (KTC), who actually coined the term information pollution, unleashed by Information Technology (IT) alongside, especially by the Web, a byproduct of IT. Dr. Chou in 2002 during his speech at a 14th biennial conference of International Telecommunications Society (ITS) talked about the side effects of Information Technology and the undesirable effects it had over society at large in the form of infollution, which means inofmatization pollution. Information pollution is broadly referred as an outcome of information revolution, wherein people are supplied with contaminated information, which is of less importance, irrelevant, unreliable and unauthentic, which lacks exactness and precision, which always has an adverse effect on society at large.

It is not that information pollution may have gone unnoticed among consumers of information, but what made them pay lenient view towards the production, distribution and equally consumption of contaminated information is due to lack of realization towards the detrimental effect all this is going to have on human activities in the long run.

4. RELATED LITERATURE

Researchers across the globe have raised concerns towards the information pollution from time to time, but the people still don't grow conscious of the need and importance of pollution free information and the situation is more adverse in developing and under developing countries.

Nielsen (2003) is of the view that the excessive content mostly distracts the information seeker form its real essence and people find it difficult to extract useful information. Nielsen in his article has highlighted about the importance of brevity of information and how actually long and undesirable information makes it difficult for people to extract the most relevant & useful information. Cameron and Curtin (1985) in their study of tracing sources of information pollution discussed about the print media for having an unwritten policy on advertising. McCloskey and Zaragoza (1985) in their study did an experiment to assess, how misleading post event information plays its part in memory impairment.

Eva et al (2000) in their study discussed about overcoming the misleading information by applying the reasoning strategies and they actually found how novice diagnosticians overcome such a problem with such application. Researchers in their study argue about the misconceptions of scholars about political ignorance among people for individual reasons, which otherwise is not so and is just an outcome of quality of information environment. Alba, Hutchinson and Lynch (1991) in their study of memory and decision making argued about how people are actually bombarded with information from all corners which differ in credibility and how the memory of people should be as accurate as possible. Since people are the consumers of different sort of products, as such, have to see by themselves whether the information circulated about the consumables they go for, is true or false.

Had people not come across the polluted or contaminated information, they would hardly look for the authenticity and credibility of information supplied and the sources thereof. Since people look for authentic and credible information, this in itself corroborates the fact that there is large scale contamination of information, vis-à-vis information pollution. Hasher, Goldstein & Toppino (1977) in their article frequency and the conference of referential validity deliberated about how the memory of the original context is as important as memory for the claim. People tend to hold the information true once it is seconded by some familiar source, despite not remembering or recalling the original context or the source of the claim.

Information overload is equally a term in vogue these days, which can also be considered as one of the forms of information pollutions and is being seen as one of the reasons affecting the decision making ability of a person. Milford & Perry (1977) are of the view that information overload can be considered as that information, which is over and above the processing capacity. This definitely can be termed both for machines and humans. Simon (1979) argues that cognitive capacity is important for decision making and its limited capacity reduces the quality of decision making.

Information overload is also being seen more as a reason of distraction rather sharpening the focus. Woodhead (1965) and Eschenbrenner (1971) is of the view that the more there is distraction more there are chances of decrease in decision accuracy. Information Technology or Computers are also being seen as growing sources of distraction and interruption, argues Panko (1992). Baecker et al (1995) is of the view that people associated with computer related activities suffer from cognitive loads, hence are more susceptible to interference from interruptions. As per Reuters (1997) in 1000 Fortune companies, 50% of management staff are always left overwhelmed with the number of messages they receive and this interruption is being seen over six times an hour. Speier, Valacich & Vessy (1999) on the information overload perspective undertook a study, entitled "the influence of task interruption on individual decision making" and observed that interruptions are very detrimental in decision making even in simpler tasks and the need is to understand how the negative influence of interruptions can be mitigated to improve the individual decision making.

5. SOURCES OF FORMATION POLLUTION

It won't be perhaps inappropriate to say that there are as many sources of information pollutions as there are sources of information production. One or the other way, intentionally or unintentionally, overtly or covertly there is always some sort of information distortion & information contamination, but mostly gets unnoticed. Some of the major sources of information pollution include.

5.1. Information Technology

Information Technology, if on one hand has revolutionized the information production, its handling and dissemination; at the same time it is being seen as one of the worst polluters of information. The Internet is indeed a blessing in its own way and one can imagine how the recourse of life will suffer in its absence, especially in the present day world, where most of the routine activities, which previously otherwise were used to be handled manually by running from pillar to post are now being handled by technology in automated form by seating at one place.

Information Technology is actually supplemented by its various subsystems in the course of information pollution, which include.

5.1.1. World Wide Web (WWW)

The web has become one of the largest sources of information, which has amassed data stored with hundreds and thousands of servers across the length and breadth of the globe. A good proportion of this stored information on these servers is structured to a good extent, but the major portion of the information is cluttered and unstructured. Richmond (1998) in his study about evaluating the web resources, suggested ten C's to be followed while going ahead with information seeking on the internet. These C's include, content, credibility, critical thinking, copyright, citation, continuity, censorship, connectivity, comparability and context. Alexander and Tate (1999) while deliberating upon the reliability of the Web resources by judging them for accuracy, authority, currency, coverage and objectivity, while as Fritch and Cromwell (2001) are of the view that one should evaluate the information retrieved from the web should be based on author competence & trustworthiness, document validity and overt & covert affiliation with an institution.

The greatest difficulty with the web is
- Source of unstructured information
- Supplier of unsolicited information
- Unregulated information production and dissemination
- Absence of mechanism to check superfluous & distorted information

5.1.1.1. SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Media is the latest Internet offering, which has brought a revolution in the lives of common masses in its own way, even one should not be having hesitations in admitting the fact, that social media has ushered a new dawn of freedom of expression. Social media has empowered common masses by becoming their mouthpiece, whereby people express their views and opinions on a range of issues freely, frankly and fearlessly. Haider and Koronios (2003) in their study on authenticity of information in cyberspace voiced their concerns about the freedom of expression. The authors are of the view that freedom of

expression should be defended as long as the content is not inciting violence, derogatory, affecting public opinion, fomenting communal hatred. Social media, if on one hand has introduced us to the world of real freedom of expression, on the other hand it has also brought us closer to the dangers of absolute freedom of expression. I am reminded of Elbert Hubbard, who has said, 'responsibility is the price of freedom', rightly for the fact that excessive freedom involves dangers of its own kind.

5.1.1.2. SPAM

Electronic messaging in the form of emails has not just overcome the space and time barriers, but has equally empowered humans to seek a timely solution of the problems, which otherwise used to remain missing in the conventional methods of exchange of information. Over a period of time, this form of information exchange does not fascinate the internet users to the same extent as it used to, a decade or so back. Spam is the name given to those electronic messages, which one receives from people not known to the recipient, as these messages are mostly promotional in nature. Stover and Nielsen (2002) argued about the depleting usability of emails, where with each passing day, it is becoming less useful for personal as well as for professional reasons. Some of the reasons cited include, delivery of lot of undesired stuff, which hardly benefits readers, time consuming activity and abundance of junk mail, which users treat more as a personal assault. Instant messaging (IM) is what the authors see as a substitute for emails and that is where we are as on date. Most of the time people respond more quickly any IM, be it on social networking sites or the other IM chats.

5.2. Mobile Phones

The growing trend towards flashing the instant messages on mobile phones by service providers of various business houses with the view to promote their products creates information pollution in its own way. It is always distracting and disturbing, when all of a sudden mobile phone of any third person starts ringing at important places, especially like libraries, classrooms or while being in the mid of a meeting, seminar, conference or an important lecture. Ling (2004) believes that "clashes with many

social situations, particularly those governed by a heightened sense of normative expectations (p.125)". Brette et al. (2006) in their study on mobile phones have opined that given the constructive use of mobile technology, it won't be appropriate to suggest banning the use of mobile phones at sensitive places. Though preventing mobiles to ring at sensitive places will be well supported by people at large, but this sort of practice is not going to be the solution of the problem, as it may prove tempting instructors and institutions.

5.3. Books and Journals

Hundreds of journals are being published with common titles, mostly confusing, with heavy prices, which makes it difficult to the seeker of information to get a desired piece of information. These subscriptions instead of helping one to get the relevant piece of information, leads one to get lost in information clutter, which is mostly unorganized. Hundreds of research projects get daily bogged down due to the use of the polluted information, with the result, these huge heaps of information produced questions its own credibility and authority.

5.4. Information Explosion

The concept of information explosion may be new to people passively associated with the production and consumption of information, but not to the people actively engaged with production, handling, dissemination, organization and exploitation of information. An information explosion occurs when the emphasis is paid on a quantitative aspect of information production and quality aspect is overlooked, hence resulting in information pollution. Sustainable production and consumption of information is a key to proportionate growth and development. Producers of information should be equally concerned about its purposive consumption. Hybrid publishing has become the order of the day, as same information produced and reproduced in both electronic and print formats. Indeed important to protect the interest of both the type and kind of users, but definitely there is a need to look for a middle path.

Information explosion cannot be substituted for information pollution, information explosion simply means exponential growth of information, whereby

consumers of a particular kind of information are not able to consume all the relevant information produced in their chosen field and the information produced may not necessarily be contaminated or polluted. The former is a quantitative aspect, while as the lateral is the quality aspect, so there is always need to regulate the two and the former cannot be compromised at the cost of lateral. Information pollution on the other hand can be referred to a situation, wherein people are supplied with contaminated, unreliable, unauthentic, irrelevant information. Information explosion is equally an outcome of duplication of information, reproducing the same information in different formats, multiplication of information and other similar activities, which are least desirable.

5.5. Unorganized Information

Proper and systematic organization of information is as important as the creation of information itself. Improper and unorganized information is nothing more than a heap of straw. The internet, if on one hand has helped us to overcome the barriers of space and time with its unblemished speed and delivery, on the other hand it has also become one of the largest sources of unstructured information, which as a result has converted it into one of the time consuming information data banks, and is gradually eclipsing the speed and delivery distinction it has. Need is to pay attention towards those institutions or organizations which are actively engaged in the organization of knowledge and information and Libraries and information centers being one of them.

5.6. Plagiarism

Plagiarism means differently to different people, but in every case it involves the intellectual theft, one or the other way. The definition of plagiarism given in the Collins Dictionary of English language reads as, plagiarism is the act of plagiarizing ideas, passages, etc., from another's work and presenting them as one's own without acknowledging the actual source, Hanks (1979). Fialkoff (1993), according to the Association of American Historians, "plagiarism is a misuse of the writings of another author, including limited borrowing without attribution of another's distinctive and research findings".

There are a good number of recorded instances

when incidents of plagiarism came to the fore and ruined the careers of well know personalities of their respective fields. Be it Nina Totenberg, who in 1972 was alleged of copying content from Washington post for her article, which she had written for national observer or the Mike Barnicle, who in 1998 faced suspension for using jokes of George Carlin without attribution. An incident of plagiarism was also reported against Ambrose by the daily standard for his book, The Wild Blue: The Men and Boys Who Flew the B-24s over Germany, with Thomas Childers book, Wings of Morning and other books by Doubleday and Simon & Schuster. The Forbes.com went ahead with its investigation and observed that the Wild Blue reflected a pattern, which was found similar through Ambrose's doctoral thesis from 1963. Goodwin was next to follow the suit for plagiarizing the content from Kathleen Kennedy: Her Life and Times by Lynne McTaggart's (Doubleday, 1983) in her book, The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys (Simon & Schuster, 1987). In the subsequent editions the footnotes and acknowledgements were added from McTaggart's book. All this resulted her to resign from Harvard's board of overseas, from the Pulitzer Prize board along with cancellation of various speaking invitations.

Plagiarism is an information pollution of its own kind, though people may dub it only to steeling of others work or intellectual theft without acknowledging the others work, but the fact is reproducing others information by labeling it own, leads to confusion to seeker of information as what to rely on and the authoritative source of information thereof.

6. CONCERNS OF INFORMATION POLLUTION

Pollution of every sort affects living beings in its own way and so are its consequences.

6.1. Ecologically

Though, by and large it may appear that information pollution only affects human beings actively only, but the fact is this pollution has an ambit of its own kind, which encompasses the whole of the ecology and environment in which we all dwell. Needless

to say that our research findings, our activities, our all other day to day activities have direct bearing with the environment, we dwell in, thereby information pollution affects our ecology and environment in a passive way.

6.2. Decision Making

Information overload has a profound impact on the decision making ability of a person says Buchanan and Kock (2001). The author quoted the popular press term "Information Fatigue Syndrome" which is comprehended as hampering the decision making ability of a person. Allen and Griffeth (1997) in their study pointed out that traditionally the decision making ability of people used to be hampered for the want of required information for decision making, while in the present day world the decision making ability is hampered due to information overload, as what to believe and what not. Availability and supply of abundance information on any given topic hampers the decision making ability of a person for varied reasons. Information overload or excessive information always creates doubts about the authenticity and reliability of information, as which piece of information is more authentic and thereof to make use of. Decision making ability of individual recedes hence, becomes difficult to arrive at a conclusion on any give problem. Decision making ability of individuals, institutions and for that matter even of organizations gets hampered due to supply of polluted information.

6.3. Health

Eastin (2001) in his study about the credibility of online health information raised concerns about the vast amount of health information available and accessible to masses via internet is not always authored by medical professionals. The author in his study laid emphasis on the greater need to ascertain the credibility of information available. The author conducted a study with 125 subjects to assess the health related website on six different assignments and found, that message credibility is more related with source expertise. To have a strong and robust health sector in a country, need is to work on areas, whereby all the health related information generated or collected from different quarters is put to the litmus test, before applying the same for the cure of the mass-

es. Health care professionals advocate the hymn, 'prevention is better than cure' but the fact remains, both are the faces of the same coin and none of them can be neglected on each other's behest. Supplying contaminated information or without checking the authenticity and credibility of information can always downplay with the health of the masses.

7. SOME PREVENTIVE MEASURES

As is said prevention is better than cure, given this fact by no means it would be extraneous to say, that there is greater need to pay more heed of taking preventive measures in every sphere of human activity rather waiting for things to grow beyond control and then look for curative measures. Since Information pollution, like environmental pollution is man-made, as such, can be handled more effectively by working on its preventive measures rather looking at its curative part. There cannot be anything better than sensitizing people about the prevention of information pollution on the parallel lines to that of environmental pollution.

7.1. Information Literacy(IL)

Postman (1992, 61) stated that "we are driven to fill our lives with the quest to access Information", and the human creativity is immensely influenced by information. Information Literacy proves very handy in overcoming information pollution issues, where individual perceptions of people come into play to judge the authenticity and reliability of information they are being provided or supplied with. Information literacy plays a very vital role while retrieving information from the web, especially when the authenticity and reliability of information available on the web is being questioned. Braun (1997) in in his study invited the attention of seeker of information towards the aspects that information literacy is not only about being able to locate relevant information, but also encompasses the ability of an individual to interpret, evaluate, and apply the retrieved relevant information.

Need is to introduce information literacy as a part of the curriculum from the very beginning of formal schooling. The more we pay attention towards the use of authentic and authoritative information, the more it

will lead us to produce refined and pure information, with emphasis on sustainable information production and its consumption with minimal information pollution.

> **IL develops Professional Competence**
> **IL leads Valuing Information**
> **IL leads Skill Development**
> **IL leads to Bridge Knowledge Gap**
> **IL leads to flow of Information from Information Haves to Information Have-nots**
> **IL leads to Information Economy**

Information Literacy also Leads to:
- Valuing information and its use.
- Considering appropriate sources of information and its usage
- Using information to learn.
- Learning to make use of information in a variety of ways.
- Developing Information competency to access, evaluate, organize, exploit, create, or even disseminate information.
- According to ALA 1989, IL is about being definite about the problem,
- Technological literacy.
- Developing skills to extract most authentic, reliable and exact information.

Information literacy apart from increasing the decision making ability of the person helps in prioritizing the need and use of information.

7.2. Censorship

Censorship is the age old tool, which has proved instrumental in regulating the behaviour of people who believe in getting more involved with publishing provocative and anti social content. Censorship has helped to play a constructive role in the dissemination of authentic and reliable information published through conventional means. Contrary to this fact, in the absence of censorship of content published on various websites, blogs and social networking sites goes irrepressible. Deibert (2008) in his article, the geopolitics of internet control raises the issue of information flow across boarder in the light of the sovereignty of a state. The author argues that over a

period of time, the role of the Internet has changed considerably, when it was rated as a medium of free flow of information and more of freedom of expression. Today the Internet has become an area of concern, especially in the absence of censorship and others. The author highlights the sensitive areas like national security, cultural sensitivity & social values which appear to be getting eroded by the free flow of unregulated information on the Web. Absence of censorship, on content published on the Internet has not just boosted the information pollution, but has also invited the dangers of inciting social unrest. Pandita (2013) correlated need and importance & prevalence of censorship to the time of Adam and Eve, when they were prohibited from eating the forbidden fruit in Eden Garden. The author further believes that censoring content which is sacrilegious, communal, derogatory, or provocative in one or the other form and which can easily stimulate social unrest by no means should be rated as a curb on freedom of expression.

7.3. Framing and Enforcing Laws

Although people are very much conscious of laws and regulations and the law-fearing people always try to abide by all such regulations, which are there to ensure public welfare and betterment. People have got every right to not to be disturbed unnecessarily. Schellekens and Prins (2006) undertook a study on the role of law in regulating the authentic information on the web, given the increasing difficulty in ascertaining the reliability of available information. The authors further argue that social norms towards regulation or self-regulation of content disseminated on the web has yet to come fully into force and wherever these norms exist to some extent, they are not away from their own limitations. The authors are of the view that self-regulation can be easily taken as a stepping stone towards promoting social norms in this regard. As is known, information does not mean only the written content; it can be a voice call, video call, photograph, cryptographic writing, or even any other kind of physical arrangement. To regulate information production and its communication behaviour, there is always need to put in place regulations, which if not adhered to, should be enforced to avoid information pollution or its contamination.

7.4. Information Ethics

Floridi (2002) in his article discussed about information ethics and how these ethics can actually be brought into practice to bridge the digital divide. The author has emphasized on the formulation of universal common ethical standards to fight information entropy, which can be in the form of destruction, corruption, pollution and depletion of information. The author further pleads that the ethical use of ICT is imperative for the sustainable development of an equitable information society. The author has correlated the need of ethics to be extended from the biosphere to the info-sphere. Information ethics can be applied at any level of information systems, which ranges from its creation, collection, dissemination, exploitation and many more, which allow free and fair use of information. Information ethics is something which can only be handled by self regulatory mechanism. Information Literacy can play an important part in evolving information ethics among producers and consumers of information. People can be sensitized about information ethics in the areas of Verbal Communication, Handling and use of Information Technology, Avoiding Plagiarism, Copyright Violation, Intellectual Property Rights, Censorship, Information Hacking, to various other information abuses.

7.5. Other Proposed Solutions

Jakob Nielsen (2004) in his ten step solution to cleaning information pollution, both at personal and professional level advocated of having self-restraint in checking emails. The author suggests don't reply all emails, don't use Instant Messaging, write very brief and to the point, keep customers informed through web portals, avoid reply to least important quires etc. Orman (1984) finds information pollution in the form of information overload, which is irrelevant, unsolicited, redundant and low-value, as such affects human activities in more serious and detrimental way. Orman apart from advocating of having a conscious approach towards writing precisely and clearly is also of the view that at the organizational level, we should pay emphasis on the time and stress management among the personnel of an organization, as all these measures will help in tackling the information pollution to a great deal. Bray (2008) advocates of replacing technologies which frequently trouble, with lesser troubling

technologies as a measure in curbing information pollution. The author suggested the need for examining the information science artifacts. The author is of the view that internet empowerment is accompanied with 'information pollution' and 'information overload' hamper the quality of decision making ability of an individual. The researcher points towards cognitive studies which have shown humans have a limit towards information consumption to which one can show conscious focus and once reached to its limit the situation is termed as information consumption saturation level and the whole process he termed can lead to decision paralysis.

8. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Every single activity of each individual is bound to generate one or the other sort of information and the unprecedented creation and dissemination of information since long back is being rated as information explosion and rightly so, for the fact that people used to find it difficult to consume all the created relevant information of their concerned filed. People mostly faced information explosion out of duplication of information, reproducing the same information in different formats, multiplication of information and other similar activities which have otherwise been undesirable. People are yet to overcome the problems faced by the deluge of information generated through conventional means of publication viz. Print etc., and thereon coming into being of IT and ICT applications laced with the web, added to the woes of the people.

The menace of information pollution is looming larger over society, people day in and day out suffer at the hands of information pollution, but have not grown aware of the prevalence of information pollution and the need & importance of consuming information, which is free from contamination. The distortion of facts in the production of new information is so minute that it hardly makes any profound impact on the daily dwelling methods, but when these minute distortions assume a greater role & significance and then it starts becoming a cause of worry for us.

SOFT TARGETS OF INFORMATION POLLUTION

Society: Information circulated in the interest of general masses as a group, section, community or society at large should by no means be polluted, which otherwise is bound to have far reaching consequences. Information disseminated in the areas like, health, education; economics, politics & religion, etc., are of general interest and supplying any contaminated information in these spheres can prove suicidal.

Business: Business activities are solely dependent on decision making ability of the top management, given this fact, there is always need to supply filtered information, which otherwise can translate productivity and growth into a loss.

Education: Education is one of the priority sectors of any nation and to supply contaminated information among researchers and students can crush the scientific temper of young minds and this can only be avoided by disseminating information, which is devoid of contamination & pollution and by equally promoting information literacy programmes.

SOFT SOURCES OF INFORMATION POLLUTION

Media: Media in general and electronic in particular has somewhere forgotten its role & responsibility to pass on authentic and credible information to society at large. Sensationalizing news items beyond their being so has become the order of the day. Media is somewhere required to be reminded and called for professional ethics involved, with total impartiality, by paying regard to public sentiments and many more.

Internet: People most of the time complain of internet being one of the time consuming sources of information and to extract the most exact, reliable and authentic information from the web is almost impossible due to information cluttering. People do show faith in the authenticity of uploaded information, especially when it comes to retrieving information from the official websites of govt., while as the case is not so with other web sources. The content going uncensored and uncut on social media, without scrutiny is an area of concern. Spreading messages, which are blas-phemous, derogatory, sacrilegious and communal in nature is a common practice these days. Authenticity of information posted on social media has always been worrisome. People without ascertaining facts about the information start believing in it and upon seeing the derogatory content in actual start reacting to it. In the normal course, one receives far more spam mails than the desired or relevant ones. Modern day lottery frauds and the prize money offered to recipients, is a menace of its own kind, whereby innocent people are being duped of their hard earned money. All these activities either actively or passively are an outcome of information pollution and people apart from violating communication laws, least bother about the inconvenience caused to others.

Having legal provisions and enforcing laws to empower people with the Right to Information is a welcome step, but what is more important is to ensure that people should get the authentic and reliable information. Thereby, the need is to enforce legislations which will ensure Right to Right Information instead of mere Right to Information. Most of the time people are supplied with irrelevant, superfluous and distorted information, which is least of any use, which can also be termed as redundant and unsolicited information.

Information pollution control is more a subject of self-regulation and ethical, where checks and balances are intrinsic and is as much an intentional act as it is unintentional. However, when it comes to willful, intentional, and deliberate act of distorting facts by the individuals or the organizations, the issue becomes more serious. Production of reliable, valid and authentic information at a faster pace should indeed be our prime consideration, but in no case it should come to us at the cost of information pollution. If technology is proving as a blessing on one hand, on the other hand its mishandling is proving equally a curse and to reap maximum benefits from all quarters of IT need is to take good care of technology and technology will itself take good care of us'.

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