A little, digital learning is a dangerous thing. Or is it?

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Today, the quest for that instant hit of knowledge is an easy and insatiable one. As digital humans, we've come to expect digital 'assistants' such as Google, Alexa or Siri to know everything. We have little or no time for a slow Wi-Fi connection or poor network connection. We just need the answer now!

As digital humans, our time is filled with timesaving devices and systems. We've succumbed to a world of scrolling, swiping and 'emojifying' because it's quicker. Technology has become a great, quick hit knowledge generator. However, is it also stifling our ability to think and importantly, to question what we hear or read? We tend to 'Ask Google' because we can do this quickly. However, quickly isn't necessarily better in a fake news world, where we need to have confidence that what we're receiving is authentic and reliable. In this sense, a little, digital learning is a dangerous thing.

The only way we can ensure authentic and reliable, is if we take time to think these quick fire, digital answers through. It takes but a split second longer to stop and ask ourselves if we can trust the knowledge we're being served. In digital human terms, this means not taking the first answer as read. It means seeking answers from reliable sources. It also means we have to be aware of the echo chambers we might find ourselves in.

In his 2015 book 'Biblio TECH: why libraries matter more than ever in the age of Google,' John Palfrey argues librarians have always led the way in making information accessible, and preserving knowledge and culture over the long term. Digitization of libraries, he says, is akin to 'hacking' the library structure and process for the good. Digital copies of original texts should therefore be freely and widely available.

Far from dissuading people from actually visiting libraries, by making books available online, the opposite is true. Digitized collections have increased library visitor numbers, having inspired an era of digital humans to interact physically with the original texts.

Arguably, also, digitized libraries and collections serve as the ultimate marque of authenticity and reliability. In a technology mediated world, where digital humans are quick to act and even-quicker to judge, libraries have an important role to play in helping to mitigate the echo chambers and to be at the forefront of providing reliable, expert knowledge for those of us (and there are many!) seeking the truth. A little digital learning then becomes a valuable thing – for the knowledge consumer and the provider.