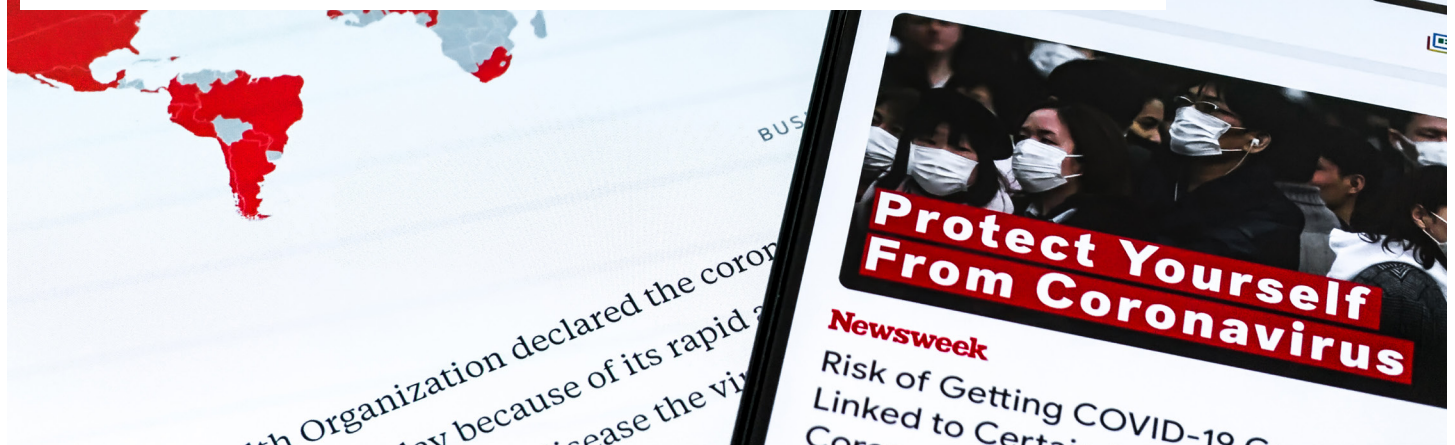COMMENTARY

# Introducing the COVID-19 Misinformation Toolkit

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### ABSTRACT

The following commentary article aims to introduce the University of Ottawa Library's COVID-19 Misinformation Toolkit which has two objectives; first, to provide direct links to COVID-19 related library materials and second, to create open educational resources, including details of the authors' systematic review on COVID-19 misinformation on social media, and interviews with interdisciplinary experts regarding COVID-19 misinformation. This toolkit is now available on the library website in both English and French.

### RÉSUMÉ

Cet article de commentaire vise à introduire la Boîte à outils de la désinformation COVID-19 de la Bibliothèque de l'Université d'Ottawa qui a deux objectifs. La premier est de fournir des liens directs vers des documents de la bibliothèque liés au COVID-19. Le second est de créer des ressources éducatives gratuites, y compris des détails de la revue systématique des auteurs sur la désinformation COVID-19 sur les média sociaux, et des entretiens avec des experts interdisciplinaires concernant la désinformation COVID-19. La boîte à outils est disponible sur le site web de la Bibliothèque en anglais et en français.

*Keywords: Misinformation, COVID-19, Social Media, Infodemic*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

People all around the globe have been directly and indirectly impacted by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Beyond the public health consequences, COVID-19 has also been a hot topic of discussion on social media and webpages. A large amount of COVID-19 data and information is available on the internet and with the advanced technology available, can be rapidly shared. Anyone can freely generate and share their thoughts online about the virus. Unfortunately, some users create and disseminate content which are untrue, misleading and lack scientific evidence to support their views about COVID-19. This inaccurate information online has caused

fear and stress for many people and has also made the public health offices' interventions for providing accurate information and resources for the public not fully effective. The topics of disinformation include original sources of the virus, vaccination and treatments of the virus. As information professionals at the University of Ottawa Library's Learning and Student Success Unit, we identified the importance and urgency to help academic communities and the public to learn and become more aware about COVID-19 fake news and conspiracy theories. Therefore, we developed the COVID-19 Misinformation Toolkit which could be accessed by visiting the following URLs below or searching on your preferred search engines **(Figure 1)**:

English page: https://uottawa.libguides.com/c.php?g=715113
French page: https://uottawa.libguides.com/c.php?g=715145

***Figure 1: COVID-19 Misinformation Toolkit homepage on the University of Ottawa Library website***



The first goal of the toolkit is to provide a list of resources related to COVID-19 misinformation available online and offline at the University of Ottawa Library. This provides users with direct access to the online and print COVID-19 misinformation-related books, journal articles, and webpages of Canadian provincial and federal public offices and the World Health Organization (WHO). We have also embedded the WHO and the Public Health Agency of Canada's Twitter accounts to inform users of recent news development about the COVID-19.

The second goal of the toolkit is to develop open educational resources (OER) to support learning and research activities at the University of Ottawa and also other institutions in Canada and abroad. Thematic content in the OER page includes what we know thus far about COVID-19 misinformation from academic literature, fact-checking strategies, suggestions to help adjust your research in light of COVID-19 misinformation, how to publish your literature review on COVID-19 misinformation, as well as Q&A and feedback between librarians, students, professors, and researchers on COVID-19 misinformation. We also include links to connect with peers or senior academics who are doing COVID-19 misinformation research, as well as provide an opportunity to test your knowledge on COVID-19 misinformation with a multiple-choice test.

At the time of writing, we are very pleased to announce that we have conducted an interview with Dr. Raywat Deonandan, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Ottawa. The interview will soon be posted on the OER page of the COVID-19 Misinformation Toolkit. We asked Dr. Deonandan about the different content categories of COVID-19 misinformation, particularly on social media; how the COVID-19 misinformation spreads; what the motivations are that drive distribution of the COVID-19 misinformation; and, what are the effects of the COVID-19 misinformation for Canadians and people around the world? We plan to conduct similar interviews with computer science and humanity professors to gain different perspectives about the COVID-19 misinformation. Moreover, the authors are also in the process of conducting a systematic literature review on COVID-19 misinformation on social media. The full review will be submitted for publication in a journal and some details from the review will be posted on the toolkit.

## 2. CONCLUSION

We invite you to visit the University of Ottawa Library's COVID-19 Misinformation Toolkit, available in both English and French. Our goal is to transform our library to not just be a place of housing books and journals, but also be a place for creating accessible knowledge for everyone, as we will all get through the COVID-19 challenges together.