

Paris Declaration on Media and Information Literacy in the Digital Era

A new milestone

Media and Information Literacy (MIL) has been a growing field in the world, from early media education in the 1980s to Media and Information Literacy in the 2000s. There are a number of valuable declarations and frameworks on MIL, including those of Grünwald, Toulouse, Seville, Paris, Prague, Alexandria, Fez, and Moscow, as well as the IFLA MIL Recommendations and the Global Alliance for Partnerships on MIL Framework and Action Plan.

The 21st century digital environment is deeply affecting the meaning and use of media and information. It requires continuous innovation in research and practice for media and information literacy. This declaration foregrounds MIL-centred answers to this requirement for new literacies in the increasingly widespread information environment that surrounds young people and adults alike, even while we recognise that many people worldwide are not yet Internet-connected.

Taking stock of the new environment that requires renewed emphasis on MIL

Continuous technological developments create and mediatise an ever-growing amount of content and information as well as new online spaces. They introduce new issues, challenges and possibilities as the Internet scenario goes mobile, ubiquitous and multiplatform. Individuals gain more control over their roles as media creators and critics, and not only consumers. Social media and social network sites take on added relevance, as they serve as references to new forms of social interaction as well as new rights and participation models such as global citizenship in a digital age. These developments give rise to added opportunities and challenges to all stakeholders and practitioners to ensure media and information literacy for citizens to navigate such enhanced flows of communication effectively.

MIL becomes increasingly necessary in the context of such developments in media as well as the economic, political and societal changes they entail. These changes include: media industries as big players; education policies that focus on economic competitiveness and efficiency; and the move towards “knowledge societies” as advanced forms of “information society”. One effect of such changes is a tendency to give more attention to computer literacy or IT literacy over MIL in many educational and policy contexts (e.g. curricula, funding, teacher training etc.).

Such trends call for reconsideration of the context and competencies (knowledge, skills and attitudes) required by citizens in the 21st Century. It is important to make clear to stakeholders that it is neither useful nor efficient to promote a single literacy or single skill set without embedding it in the wider context of MIL.

Instead of a risk of marginalization or displacement or dilution of MIL in new skills and competences, the relevance of MIL needs to be underlined as essential - especially as digital convergence becomes more widespread and naturalized, with media, information,

education and other life-supporting necessities operating online, where critical thinking, creativity and the ethical use of media and information remain key. MIL is well placed to foster public interest balances between rights and ethical considerations necessary in an increasingly complex digital world.

Computer programming has become an indispensable language to communications media and knowledge repositories, such as the Internet, radio, television, newspapers, and mobile devices, libraries etc. While it is important to ensure that all regions of the world foster and have a critical mass of computer programmers to avoid total dependency on external expertise, not everyone will become a programmer. However everyone should know that programming is not a value-free activity, and that technology should be viewed with human rights lenses. All citizens need the critical MIL competencies to demand transparency and to analyse information about what freedoms they gain or lose, what opportunities they face, and what risks they take, by interacting with computer programming languages that are normally invisible.

UNESCO's concept of "knowledge societies" and its emerging Universality principle for Internet governance can help frame this renewed emphasis on MIL. Internet Universality envisages an Internet based on four dimensions: Human Rights, Openness, Accessibility for all and Multi-stakeholder participation (summarised in the acronym R.O.A.M). Fundamental to all these, and to establishing their interrelations, balances, and applications to specific problems, is MIL.

Significance of key actors

See Annex

Renewed emphasis on MIL

Actors in MIL should

- Recognise the opportunities and challenges presented by the embedding of the media and technology in all aspects of human life and that they embody human values and necessitate additional literacies;
- Consider the public interest value of media and the Internet and prompt debate about them as a public good or commons;
- Affirm the publicness of MIL and public access to media, information, education and to knowledge, fully aware of different socio-cultural contexts;
- Consider the move towards human rights frameworks for the Internet;
- Affirm the necessity of MIL to underpin and enable multi-stakeholder participation in Internet governance, covering the range of institutions such as school policies through to international arrangements;

- Consider the MIL potential of media, information and ICT companies;

Unpacking MIL today

See Annex

Recommendations to UNESCO, the European Commission and the multi-stakeholder community at large

We, the Participants at the First European Media and Information Literacy Forum within the framework of the Global Alliance for Partnerships on Media and Information Literacy (GAPMIL)

Declare our renewed support to media and information literacy with a view to empowering individuals in the digital age, and in this connection, commit:

1. To describing MIL as a complex set of 21st century literacy practices; a means of enhancing inclusion, knowledge, skills and critical attitudes to information, culture and co-operation and a mechanism for all people to access, create and innovate.
2. To foster MIL to address issues of access, privacy, safety and security and the ethical use of information, media and technology, informed by human rights standards and to recognize the role of MIL in relation to cultural diversity, intercultural and interreligious dialogue and the protection of citizens in countries with fragile social capital and weaker democratic political culture.
3. To advance content creation, across media and in multiple forms, as a key tool in the development of the digital economy, by setting up media labs in educational and cultural institutions.
4. To promote MIL in relation to personal and professional lifelong development through collaboration between stakeholders in vocational education and training, higher education institutions, the research community, public and private media and civil sector organisations.
5. To support formal curriculum development for MIL within schools.
6. To encourage and advocate for common, shared and co-operative policies and strategies related to MIL between educational, cultural, economic and technological fields to enhance intercultural and interreligious dialogue, gender equality and a culture of peace and respect in the participative and democratic public sphere.
7. To encourage media, information and ICT companies to integrate MIL priorities in their strategic plans and governance such as collecting specific indicators, including criteria in CEO pay, maintaining a regular dialogue with stakeholders (customers, employees, academics, the financial community, young citizens and civil society) and working within clear and transparent accountability frameworks.
8. To ensure that libraries and other cultural institutions regularly update their MIL strategies and educational provision to include transliteracy practices and to ensure that library and cultural institution professionals are trained to develop the necessary capacity to educate service users for MIL.

Roadmap

To advance MIL through:

- Empowering the Global Alliance for Partnerships on MIL (GAPMIL).
- Creating continental and national Chapters of GAPMIL around the world beyond the regular organization of continental and universal forums and ensuring that media and information technology stakeholders are involved.
- Fostering the creation of a virtual Global MIL network for cooperation and federation of research institution, if possible in every continent.
- Promoting MIL Open Educational Resources (OER).
- Extending the UNITWIN Cooperation Programme on Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue (led by UNESCO and the UN Alliance of Civilizations) as a means to federate efforts between universities and educational institutions in order to promote research, training of teachers and library professionals, master degrees and doctoral programs on MIL.
- Convening international organizations and educational authorities around the world to promote the introduction of MIL in the formal, non-formal and informal education, as a core competency and as an object of knowledge, study and educational practice.
- Calling on the media and information providers to cooperate in promoting MIL by providing opportunities for the participation of their audiences, collaborating with educational systems and complying with ethical norms informed by human rights, and the principles of freedom of expression and information.

Conclusion

These recommendations present a far-reaching strategy for an inclusive entitlement for all citizens to media and information literacy in the 21st century.

We urge all stakeholders to play an active role in advocating and implementing this declaration in MIL policy and practice.

ANNEX

Significance of key actors

Media, information and ICT companies can express commitment in promoting MIL, as part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) policy. MIL matters to cultural and content industries in particular because they deal with a huge range of media and they have a specific potential: fostering curiosity, mutual comprehension, critical thinking among their audiences in particular young people; respecting freedom of expression, protecting privacy, encouraging intercultural and interreligious dialogue in the provision of content, representing women in a balanced and non-stereotyped manner, investing in creativity and innovation, detecting talents and promoting them.

Journalism, journalists and other information specialists are central to good governance, democracy and freedom of expression and access to information. MIL matters to them because they need to think reflexively about their practices and because they need an audience that understands their functions and to whom they should ultimately be accountable. Media are being challenged in their practice by the growth of big data and the emergence of participatory or citizen journalism as well as grassroots social media. Their professional status and their values can benefit from further training in MIL for better investigation and promotion of their ideas in a pluralistic setting.

Libraries and learning centres are essential partners for MIL. In countries of big data and information overload, libraries and librarians take on new and increasing significance. In countries with low connectivity, libraries as spaces provide citizens with access to media and ICT-mediated information, and literacy about this access. MIL in the digital age then becomes a *raison d'être* of modern libraries. Library professionals are instrumental in embedding MIL in educational curricula as well as in non-formal and informal learning arenas. There is a need to enhance the role of library professionals as educators and facilitators of learning. There is also a need to revise library user education to make sure that it is expanded to address transliteracy aspects in the evolving information environment.

Audiovisual authorities or related national media, information, multimedia, and broadcast and print media content regulators as well as media self-regulatory bodies are also central to promoting MIL. Their role in achieving MIL for all is a part of their mandate to protect the common or public good.

The MIL research community remains a key agent in consolidating knowledge and sharing best practices across the world, benefiting from the trans-border capacity of the digital networks. Research on media literacy and information literacy has been pursued as separate strands in the past and they need to converge to support the development of new theoretical and methodological frameworks to assess MIL, as well as to monitor the efficiency of national and international public policies in this area.

Civil society associations and NGOs act as a bridge between other stakeholders and ensure dialogue between MIL communities, inside and outside schools. They foster MIL activities and training in informal and non-formal settings. They reach out to adults and disadvantaged

groups and provide lifelong support. They tend to support MIL focus on citizenship and civic agency and can foster a vibrant public sphere engagement and empowerment outcomes in the digital context. Civil society professionals also need to enhance their role and develop their capacities in the new digital environment that makes their grassroots networks more efficient and their collective intelligence more distributed.

Unpacking MIL today

MIL is both sustained in its purpose and use and underpinned by new opportunities:

- MIL is an all-encompassing concept – including skill, knowledge and attitudes in relating to terms such as, media literacy, information literacy, news literacy, advertising literacy, film literacy, Internet literacy, social network literacy, computer literacy, IT literacy, digital safety, personal cyber security, etc.
- MIL comprises all media (digital and non-digital); literacy means the ability of sourcing, assessing, contributing to, and combining, different kinds of media and information and using different media and information in different contexts/for different purposes.
- MIL entails the ability to combine a range of skills and competencies in order to make use of information and media, including new media developments, for achieving personal objectives. These objectives are strongly connected with individual growth (e.g. developmental tasks, identity construction, management of relationships, lifelong learning etc.) and societal challenges (organizing information, participation in public discourse, ethics and human rights, privacy, etc.).
- MIL includes the following:
 - critical thinking and reflecting media and information systems* - including evaluation of information and media content; reflection upon political/economic influences on information and the media system; the centrality of information, media and technologies to development and good governance; dealing with risks and opportunities of new media developments, assessing right to use/connect and disconnect, being forgotten, privacy, etc.
 - using information, media and digital technology for individual and societal purpose* – includes for self-expression, intercultural and interreligious dialogue, equality, and the right and the ability to make own decisions, enjoying media for leisure, learning/working with media, etc.
 - handling of media* – Here there are types and levels of operational, creative and collaborative skills, such as the ability to produce content and information products and the use of ICT in this process etc.
- As access to information and participation are core principles of today's society, MIL must be regarded as an enabler of human rights.