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UNESCO MIL ALLIANCE NEWS UPDATE

EDITORIAL

Is the Cup Half-Empty or Half-Full?

Is the cup half-empty or half-full? Those who have been in the media and information literacy fields for many years see the new, well-deserved recognition for media and information literacy as a highly positive – if delayed – development. Today, we live in a world where media and information literacy is seen as part of the solution to wide-spread misinformation and disinformation campaigns. By strengthening citizens with media and information literacy skills and strategies, media and information literacy can contribute to strategic defense, and organizations such as NATO and the EU have recognized this important role for media and information literacy in helping foster resilient populations.

But at the same time, this new mandate is overwhelming, since we are far from being able to offer MIL training in classrooms, libraries or communities. There is an urgent need for research and development in identifying how to best teach media and information literacy, how to train and support teachers and librarians who are most likely to engage with media and information literacy, and how to embed it into educational, public health, government and community institutions. Our job is to provide media and information literacy education for every citizen of every country – a tall order. But just as Microsoft resolved to put a computer in every office and home, the day will hopefully come when we can say “mission accomplished” in providing media and information literacy programs and practices *everywhere* that are consistent, replicable, measurable and scalable.

Yet there is also a demand for understanding how new technologies affect audiences and how audiences are changed by engaging with new technologies. Do people understand that they are being targeted with ads? That their data is being monetized? That algorithms determine what news they receive on social media? That a chart they see is based on a very small sample size? Do people understand the nature of propaganda, and that propaganda can be beneficial? And we are not just concerned with individuals interpreting media messages on an individual level; today, with natural language processing and machine learning, we can identify narratives through processing millions of documents; we can measure the impact of these narratives and track their development.

Whether an media and information literacy practitioners interests lie in research, in education, in media production, or in technology, there is plenty to explore and to do! We are at the beginning of the beginning of a new and exciting era for media and information literacy.

Tessa Jolls
ISC Regional Representative, UNESCO's North American-European Chapter
President, Center for Media Literacy

NEWS

1. **Global** -- UNESCO is pleased to inform you about its webinars addressing “Media and Information Literate Citizens: Think Critically, Click Wisely!” about the crucial role of media and information literacy (MIL) for the good of society, which took place on 23, 27 and 29 April 2021. The event culminated in the launch of UNESCO’s MIL Curriculum for Educators and Learners (second edition). It is co-organized by UNESCO and the Republic of Serbia, with the support of the European Commission and Sweden. For more information: <https://en.unesco.org/news/media-and-information-literate-citizens-think-critically-click-wisely>

2. **Brazil** -- Celebrating the International Day of Education on April 28th, the Canal Futura (Brazilian TV channel) organized an interview made by Alexandre Sayad with the MIL experts Tessa Jolls and Henry Jenkins. The full show can be watched in English at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=WFuDcosMbac A just-published retrospective of Henry Jenkins et.al. sensational 2004 report, Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century, can be found here: <https://www.medialit.org/confronting-challenges-participatory-culture>

3. **U.S.** -- The National Telemedia Council (NTC) is now renamed; NTC will now be the International Council for Media Literacy (IC4ML). The International Council’s roots go back to the 1930’s, when the group was founded in Madison, Wisconsin, USA.

4. **Australia** -- In April, the first Australian Media Literacy Symposium was held across synchronous events in Brisbane, Sydney and Canberra. This collection of videos includes a keynote presentation by Associate Professor Paul Mihalidis on ‘Pursuing equitable and just civic futures in a time of rampant media cynicism’ as well as three panel discussions that were focused on misinformation and media literacy and promoting critical engagement with digital platforms. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNciOO71W7EZHpM2QL0d5LQ>

On April 14 Australian researchers Tanya Notley, Michael Dezuanni, Sora Park and Simon Chambers released the first comprehensive national analysis of adult media literacy needs, experiences and attitudes. The authors argue that the findings show that far more needs to be done to address the needs of groups who are the least confident about their media abilities and who have access to the least media literacy support.

https://westernsydney.edu.au/ics/news/report_adult_media_literacy_in_australia

5. **U.S.** -- The 2021 NAMLE Conference, “Media Literacy + Social Justice,” will be a Virtual Conference held July 16-18, 2021. Register here: <https://web.cvent.com/event/321eac77-7e4d-4bd1-88b2-5c571a9a0aff/regProcessStep1>

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<https://en.unesco.org/themes/media-and-information-literacy/gapmil/isc>

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