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## Conference Corner

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Chan, L. et al 2002. *Budapest Open Access Initiative*. New York: Open Society Institute. Available at: <http://www.soros.org/openaccess/read.shtml> [Retrieved 22 January 2007].

# Conference report on the International Conference Media and Information Literacy (MIL) for Knowledge Societies

Moscow, 24-28 June 2012. Organised by the Russian Committee of the UNESCO Information for All Programme (IFAP) and the Interregional Library Cooperation Centre

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Media and information literacy (IL) as a joint concept are a priority of the Strategic Plan of the UNESCO IFAP, and this conference sought to highlight how the concept of literacy has changed and how researchers and practitioners can move forward. I was honoured to be invited to attend this conference by a programme specialist within the Communication and Information Sector at UNESCO to speak about librarians sharing IL teaching resources. The event was split into keynotes, plenary sessions in which invited speakers presented before the whole conference, parallel sessions of further talks, workshops on indicators and workshops on a declaration of MIL.

Jānis Kārklīņš, Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information at UNESCO, presented via video on how production of content via social media indicated a need for both teaching of media literacy and the development of indicators to benchmark different countries' progress.

The first set of plenary talks focused on the merging of information and media literacy, looking at the unique attributes of media literacy and how this alters IL. Albert Boekhorst from the University of Amsterdam highlighted how the growth of information use in everyone's lives and the changing role of technology create a need for a new concept of literacy to deal with creating and using different media. Drew Whitworth from the University of Manchester talked about using standards to assign value to different sources of information in the objective, subjective and intersubjective spheres and described a future of us all as curators and aggregators of information.

Carolyn Wilson from the University of Western Ontario discussed MIL within teacher training curricula, exploring how information is created within the triangle of 'text, audience and production'. Jesus Lau, University of Veracruz in Mexico, emphasised the importance of MIL competencies, while Sheila Webber, University of Sheffield, described (via video) the different levels of MIL – individual, organisational and national. These discussions all indicate that further research is needed by both academics and practitioners.

The University of Stirling's Ralph Catts gave a fascinating keynote that asked us to consider MIL as a new construct which recognises that we use several communication channels at once and also that ethics evolve to take into account protection of sources and information leaks. Therefore a re-tuning of information values and attitudes is crucial.

Other plenary sessions described the work of gathering evidence of indicators and the changing role of librarians in curating open educational resources (OER). Szarina Abdullah from Universiti Teknologi MARA in Malaysia described non-obtrusive observational methods helping to gain a true picture of MIL behaviours. Isabelle Turmaine of the International Association of Universities presented the concept of a project to support librarians responsible for managing OER for their organisations.

Work on development of indicators involved working groups coming up with questions to be used in a questionnaire to teachers between formal training and starting their careers. The focus is on this cohort as they are seen as the gateway to the next generation.

This conference was an important step in the development of IL as a concept, and it will be crucial for the IL community, both researchers and practitioners, to engage fully with the discussions taking place.

Attending and contributing to this conference was a huge professional and personal pleasure. It was an amazing opportunity to visit Russia and to meet so many engaged researchers and practitioners from all over the world. We had a one-day cultural tour of Moscow at the end of the conference which was enlightening and enjoyable. After a tour of Red Square and the Kremlin we sampled some delicious Ukrainian cuisine and ended the day at the Tretyakov art gallery, which was a real highlight. I would urge anyone with an interest in media and IL to attend any future conferences of this kind for a fulfilling intellectual and cultural experience.

Further information is available from <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/resources/news-and-in-focus-articles/in-focus-articles/2012/media-and-information-literacy-for-knowledge-societies/international-conference-highlights/>.