

Chapter 7

Media Information Literacy: The Answer to 21st Century Inclusive Information and Knowledge- Based Society Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Media and information literacy skills are critical contemporary skills to enable the 21st century citizen to effectively and efficaciously function in the information glut economy. This chapter explores what MIL is, outlining the relationship between media literacy and information literacy. The chapter builds a case for adoption of MIL by organizations, educators, and information practitioners. Significance of MIL against the backdrop of media convergence is interrogated. Various ways in which MIL can be integrated into the curriculum and necessary competencies required to deliver MIL by teachers and librarians are explored and a section on MIL into curriculum was developed from the UNESCO MIL curriculum for teachers. MIL evaluation was also tackled focusing on the capacity of teachers and students to evaluate sources and access information. The chapter concludes with MIL learning environment and resources.

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INTRODUCTION: RE IMAGINING THE LITERACY LANDSCAPE

The 21st century now calls for new conceptualisation of literacy as it is characterised by evolving technologies, digital natives and heavy reliance on internet information communication technologies for information production, storage and dissemination. Cordes, S. (2009:2) states that, “the skills required to navigate and perform in today’s information invite focus on a range of literacy.” Tracing the etymology of literacy found in dictionaries refers to textual competency, the degree to which an individual is competent in the skills of reading and writing of a particular language (Leaning, 2009:1). However Gamble and Easingwood (2000) have argued that to be literate is more than being able to read and write. It is about access to ideas that challenge our thinking and create new ways of looking at the world. Kress 2003 cited by Leaning (2009:1) argued that literacy as a term has moved away significantly from referring only to textual understanding and now many facets of literacy can be identified and measured; these include information literacy, media literacy, ICT literacy, visual literacy multimedia literacy and many others. To add to these plethora of literacies, Koltay (2011:218), mentioned emerging technology literacy, a type of literacy worth considering in the reimagining the literacy landscape.

Emerging technology literacy, or the ability to ongoingly adapt to, understand, evaluate and make use of the continually emerging innovations in information technology so as not to be a prisoner of prior tools and resources, and to make intelligent decisions about the adoption of new ones. Clearly this includes understanding of the human, organizational and social context of technologies as well as criteria for their evaluation (Shapiro and Hughes, 1996 cited by Koltay 2011).

A number of researchers including Kapitzke (2003), Codes (2009) and Bowden (2008) expanded the concept of literacy to include hyper-literacy, multimodal literacies and digital literacy respectively.

UNESCO, E. S. (2004:13) perceived literacy as the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute and use printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. UNESCO further argued that literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society. It is evident that in this 21st century era, the conception of literacy is not static; it requires continuous and constant updating to encompass concepts and competences in accordance with the changing circumstances of the information environment (Bawden, 2008). Expanding the horizon of the concept and aspect of literacy to blended literacies in response to the contemporary world demands

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