

# Analysis of Media and Information Literacy Definitions: A Qualitative Approach

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## Abstract

Rapid advancements in media and information technology have led to an increasingly complex and interconnected information landscape. Navigating this digital age requires critical thinking skills and a comprehensive understanding of media and information literacy (MIL). However, the definitions of MIL vary across contexts, disciplines, and cultures. This qualitative study described and analysed diverse definitions of MIL through an in-depth analysis of existing literature to shed light on nuanced perspectives within the field as well as the peculiarities and similarities of the terms ‘media literacy’ and ‘information literacy.’ By delving into qualitative dimensions, the article contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the evolving landscape of media and information literacy. Study findings will contribute to the development of a unified and comprehensive understanding of MIL and facilitate the design of educational programs and policies to enhance media literacy skills among individuals across societies and age groups. This theoretical study was devoted to analysing theoretical and conceptual definitions of Media and Information Literacy to uncover the wide-ranging aspects of the umbrella term.

**Keywords:** media literacy (ML), information literacy (IL), media and information literacy (MIL), metaliteracy, infocommunicative literacy, electracy, definitions, concepts, notions

## 1. Introduction

At present, information is readily accessible and constantly bombarding individuals via various media platforms. However, it is increasingly crucial to critically analyze, evaluate and utilize this information. Media and information Literacy (MIL) encompasses a range of skills and competencies needed to effectively interact with the plethora of available information including critical thinking skills, media production information retrieval skills, and ethical considerations.

The concept of MIL has gained significant attention from scholars, educators, and policymakers globally. But varying definitions of MIL limit its implementation and evaluation. These disparities can be attributed to the multidisciplinary nature of MIL that encompasses fields such as communication, education, psychology, and information science among others.

The present qualitative study explored and analyzed the diverse definitions of MIL and their underlying theoretical foundations and contextual factors influencing their development to provide a holistic understanding of MIL through a comprehensive review of existing literature. The author sought to identify similarities and differences across various definitions and propose a unified and comprehensive MIL definition that considers the diverse contexts in which it is applied.

ML and IL fields have been extensively investigated as separate fields in many scientific literature and articles with major focus on their role in societal development and the improvement of people's literacy.

The history of competency research shows that concepts and initiatives related to media competences (media literacy), information literacy, and media education evolved independently. The terms “media education” and “information literacy” were first used in 1960 and 1974, respectively. In the last decade, these concepts have been consolidated into MIL (Kukier, 2020: 96).

In recent years, the term MIL, introduced by UNESCO, has been widely used by international organizations and scientists.

Today, many organizations, such as UNESCO, USAID, Internews, and DW-Akademie allocate projects, grants, and scholarships in the field of MIL in almost all the regions of the world. Manuals on learning and teaching MIL have been

published in different languages. Scientific articles have also been published by scientists on the wide-ranging aspects in the field of MIL.

The present study's findings will potentially have significant implications in the field of education and policymaking. A consistent and shared understanding of MIL is essential for the design and implementation of effective educational strategies and interventions. Such an understanding will enable educators to develop targeted curricula and pedagogical approaches that enhance individuals' media literacy skills, critical thinking abilities, and responsible media engagement skills to navigate the complex information environment of the digital age. Moreover, a unified definition of MIL will lay a foundation upon which policymaking initiatives can be built facilitating the MIL integration into formal education systems and broader societal contexts.

## 2. Literature Review

The classification and comparative description of theoretical views in the field of MIL can be found in the UNESCO manual "Media and Information Literacy: Policy & Strategy Guidelines" (Grizzle et al., 2013).

The authors of the book "Artificial Intelligence: Media and Information Literacy, Human Rights and Freedom of Expression" also present theoretical approaches to MIL (Shnurenko et al., 2020).

In the Discussion Paper "Media and Information Literacy: A human rights-based approach in developing countries" published by DW Academy, authors Reineck and Lublinski (2015) put forward and described in detail one approach in the field of MIL.

Definitions and theoretical concepts and definitions in the field of ML and IL have long been widely discussed and analysed among scholars.

The group of authors in the book entitled "Public Policies in MIL in Europe" (Frau-Meigs et al., 2017) explored the current tensions in European countries as they attempted to tackle a transition to the digital age. The authors provide a comparative and cross-cultural analysis of MIL across Europe. This book includes a long-term perspective of the development of media education in Europe and various definitions of MIL as a composite notion whose evolution as a cross-cultural phenomenon depicts various trends and influences in Europe.

The Council of Europe has in recent years published several books and manuals in the field of media literacy. In the study entitled "Supporting quality journalism through media and information literacy", the Committee of experts on quality journalism in the digital age rapporteurs Chapman and Oermann (2020) analysed MIL skills and knowledge that can help the public recognise and value quality journalism. The study also briefly described relevant MIL projects and proposed models that could be used by MIL stakeholders including states in their development of future MIL programmes, strategies, and materials.

According to Leaning (2017) in "Media and Information Literacy: An Integrated Approach for the 21st Century", during the mid-to-late 2000s and early 2010s, there was an alignment between media literacy and education content, practices and foci.

Several authors noted that the conceptual convergence of MIL was gaining momentum. For example, Livingstone, Van Couvering, and Thumin (2008) described this as a positive development and argued: "*As broadcast, audiovisual, and print media converge with telecommunications, computing, and information systems, research on media literacy and information literacy could hardly remain separate. Indeed, despite their contrasting disciplinary backgrounds, theories, and methods, these research traditions have an increasingly similar object of inquiry: the public's understanding of and effective engagement with media, information, and communication technologies of all kinds.*" (103 p.)

Lee and So (2014) in their article "Media Literacy and Information Literacy: Similarities and Differences" explored the relationship between these two fields by empirically mapping out their territories and identifying their similarities and differences using the Web of Science database to delineate the content and boundary of these two fields. Their findings show that from 1956 to 2012 the two fields had different authors, university affiliations, and journals; they also differed in terms of academic origin, scope, and social concern.

Potter (2022) in the article "Analysis of definitions of media literacy" analysed how the term "media literacy" has been defined in articles published in the *Journal of Media Literacy Education*. Potter's study uncovered more than 400 definitional elements organized into a six-category scheme that reflects the full span of thinking exhibited by authors of 210 articles published in the journal.

In the present research study, the above-mentioned sources, and theoretical-conceptual views on MIL in other literature were reviewed using a comparative-critical approach to summarize the definitions and opinions of different scientists in the field of MIL, to develop a new MIL definition based on the results of the review, and to describe the role of MIL in the development of society and knowledge in today's rapidly developing information society.

### 3. Methodology

This research paper employed a qualitative approach to analyse MIL definitions to understand how MIL has been conceptualized and defined in different contexts. Meaning analysis, which examines MIL definitions that authors offer in their research works' and/or books' to identify the elements that make up of those definitions, was used in this study as illustrated subsequently.

1. **Data Collection.** The primary data source was a curated collection of definitions of media and information literacy from various scientific theoretical literature, scholarly articles, conference proceedings, reports, policy documents, and websites to ensure a comprehensive and diverse representation of definitions in the field.

2. **Qualitative Data Coding and Categorization.** A qualitative coding framework was developed to extract key themes and patterns within the selected texts. Relevant passages were coded to extract nuanced perspectives on MIL definitions. Collected sources and quotations, and diagrams and tables were studied, and a qualitative analysis of relevant MIL terms and concepts was conducted.

3. **Analysis and Interpretation.** Coded data were analysed using qualitative data analysis techniques. Patterns, themes, and variations within and across definitions were identified to comprehend how MIL has been defined in various contexts. The analysis involved iterative cycles of coding, revisiting the data, and refining the emerging themes. Interpretations were made considering the broader literature on MIL and the present research study's specific research objectives. The MIL definitions were classified into 4 groups: theoretical, knowledge-based, skills-based, and knowledge- and skill-based definitions.

4. **Limitations.** The definitions analysed were limited to selected literature from a diverse range of sources. Furthermore, the analysis was based on written definitions that may have not captured contextual factors embedded in their usage.

### 4. Analysis and Results

An in-depth analysis of the field of MIL was conducted by comparing and classifying various definitions provided by scientists, researchers, and experts from different organizations to identify key components and characteristics of MIL across various definitions, as well as similarities and differences among these definitions to gain a comprehensive understanding of MIL.

The analysis first involved compiling a comprehensive list of definitions from various sources such as academic articles, books, policy documents, and official statements. A total of 50 definitions were identified, which varied in terms of the focus, scope, and underlying theories. These definitions were then carefully examined to identify commonalities and differences.

A thematic analysis approach was adopted to categorize the definitions based on their underlying themes by identifying recurring concepts and organizing them into meaningful categories. Four main themes emerged from the thematic analysis: information literacy, media literacy, digital literacy, and critical thinking.

There was a considerable overlap between the concepts of information literacy and media literacy. The two themes were often mentioned together, indicating that they are closely related and interconnected. Digital literacy was a relatively new and emerging concept as explicitly mentioned in a few definitions. Critical thinking, on the other hand, was a recurring theme in almost all definitions highlighting its crucial role in MIL.

Furthermore, there was no single definition that encompassed all the aspects of MIL. Instead, the definitions highlighted different dimensions and perspectives of MIL depending on their context and purpose. Some definitions focused on skills and competencies required for accessing, evaluating, and using information, while others emphasized the democratic and participatory aspects of MIL.

#### *Categories of MIL definitions*

**1. Theory-based definitions.** These definitions focus on the theoretical underpinnings of MIL and media and information within broader conceptual frameworks. They highlight concepts such as critical thinking, media ecology, and cultural competence in interpreting and analysing media messages. Some theory-based definitions are listed below.

According to Leaning (2017) in "Media and Information Literacy: An Integrated Approach for the 21st Century," during the mid-to-late 2000s and early 2010s, a number of authors noted that the conceptual convergence of MIL was gaining momentum (45-46 pp.).

Lee and So (2014) wrote: "The development of digital technology is a key factor for combining media literacy and information literacy" (138 p.).

Donoso & Wijnen (2012) highlighted the interdisciplinary nature of MIL in their definition: "Media understanding, and literacy are also examined and discussed in the context of different academic disciplines such as journalism (media

messages), psychology, sociology, and communication (user and audience studies, media socialisation), education (ME, teaching ML) and information and library sciences (digital skills, Information Literacy). The approaches taken to ML and MIL depend on the cultural, societal, political, pedagogical, and labour market contexts of different countries and cultures” (2-4 pp.).

**2. Knowledge-based definitions.** Definitions falling into this category emphasize the acquisition and application of accurate information and content knowledge within media and information contexts. These definition underscore the importance of being well-informed about various media formats, sources, and topics to effectively navigate today's information landscape.

UNESCO's definition (2013) suitably models knowledge-based definitions: “Media and information literacy brings together Information Literacy and Media Literacy, along with Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Digital Literacy, as a new literacy construct that helps empower people, communities and nations to participate in and contribute to global knowledge societies. The adoption of such an approach should be viewed in the light of the greater accessibility, convergence and distribution of information and media content, in various formats and via diverse digital tools. MIL helps to develop critical thinking and problem solving, while also increasing collaboration and participation. This means that every country needs to invest in the creation of an enabling environment for MIL and that citizens need to be equipped with the necessary tools and resources to achieve individual, professional, and societal goals that are based on MIL-related competencies”.

**3. Skill-based definitions.** This category encompasses definitions that prioritize the development of practical skills needed to effectively engage with media and information. These skills include information retrieval, digital literacy, media production, and ethical decision-making regarding media consumption and production.

Skill-based definitions are the commonest approach to defining MIL. International organizations and their experts and trainers champion the general view that MIL is a field that applies in everyday life and is an integral part of people's daily life in any society today.

Skill-based definitions co-exist with more holistic definitions in which skills'-related details are enriched with contextual variables that permit the activation of the same skills.

MIL is an interrelated set of competencies that helps people to maximize advantages and minimize harm in the new information, digital, and communication landscapes. MIL encompasses competencies that enable people to critically and effectively engage with information; competencies that are indispensable to all citizens regardless of age or background (UNESCO, 2023).

DW Akademie experts Reineck & Lublinski (2015) describe a brief suitable skill-based definition: “MIL, defined as the ability to access, analyse, and create media, is a prerequisite for citizens to realize their rights to freedom of information and expression”.

USAID Central Asia Regional Mission Director, Lawrence Hardy noted: “Media literacy is neither ideological nor political but is the ability to decipher messages and think critically about information. Critical thinking is one of the major life skills that need to be mastered by all citizens as active participants in a democratic society. It helps to promote stability and avoid social polarization, thus increasing public trust in government”. (U.S. Mission Kazakhstan, 2022)

**4. Knowledge and skill-based definitions.** Some definitions combine elements of both knowledge and skill by emphasizing the integration of theoretical understanding with practical application. These definitions recognize the symbiotic relationship between knowledge acquisition and skill development in fostering MIL competencies.

The multifaceted and complex nature of the MIL field, as an "umbrella term", is more prominent in the knowledge and skill-based definitions. In most cases, the term "attitude" is also included in the umbrella term creating a general vision of MIL as a “set of knowledge, skill and attitude.” In our opinion, this view clearly illustrates that MIL includes knowledge of both ML and IL fields.

MIL is a composite set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enables and empowers citizens to competently and critically engage with media and information to increase their individual autonomy and collective solidarity in society. MIL is both a duty of governments and a right of citizens. Wide-scale MIL prompts citizens to anticipate the delivery of content of technical, ethical and professional quality from the media. Such expectations catalyse improvements in journalistic reporting, editorial organization, and the media system as a whole (Reineck & Lublinski, 2015: 5).

“MIL stands for media and information literacy, and refers to the essential competencies (knowledge, skills and attitudes) that allow citizens to engage with content providers effectively and develop critical thinking and life-long learning skills for socializing and becoming active citizens”(UNESCO, 2021: 382).

Nitsche (2020) defined the sphere of MIL in her publication entitled “The next generation of Media and Information Literacy“ as follows:

*“MIL comes with a great promise: It is about citizens learning how to navigate cyberspace, access news, analyse what information is true or false, and reflect on what they do online and how they can be a role model for others. MIL is about ensuring that citizens possess the skills to access, understand and use the internet and a variety of media. It is about creatively engaging with current media and societal issues, and actively participating in creating and protecting a public sphere which is respectful, pluralistic and engaged”* (2 p.).

A good example of "Knowledge and skills based" definitions given to the field of MIL can be observed on the UNDP “Select Project” website:

*“MIL is an educational activity aimed at strengthening the public’s capabilities to identify and handle information pollution. MIL attempts to aid citizens to think critically, contribute to information environments wisely and counter all forms of disinformation and misinformation, while strengthening social and democratic engagement. Conducting MIL can include various exercises, working with education systems, civil society or with media and social media.”* (UNDP – SELECT Project, 2023)

The definition implies that achieving media literacy necessitates the acquisition of knowledge complemented by the development of practical skills.

The article "Fostering Media Information Literacy and Digital Literacy" furnishes a comprehensive elucidation of MIL, catering to both educators and individuals. In the contemporary information-driven society, it's recognized that beyond personal enrichment, attaining literacy in navigating societal structures is pivotal for becoming an informed and empowered citizen, thereby contributing significantly to the democratization process.

*Fostering media and information literacy (MIL) among citizens is a preventive approach to tackling information pollution. Its effects are threefold. First, it supports citizens’ critical reasoning when navigating in their information environments, including those online. Second, it increases citizens’ knowledge about their digital, human and constitutional rights, as they pertain to information integrity. Third, it helps to enhance dialogue and revitalize social and democratic discourses.*

*MIL supports trust and hinders mistrust by equipping people and institutions to, for example:*

1. *Understand their various human rights, digital rights and rights to privacy.*
2. *Be cognizant of the potential information pollution concerns and how they pertain to democratic processes.*
3. *Critically listen, read and verify content before sharing information.*
4. *Apply discernment when engaging with people, information and digital spaces.*
5. *Push for transparency and ethics among key stakeholders in the information and digital landscapes.*
6. *Advocate freedom of information and freedom of expression.*
7. *Strengthen platforms for dialogue.*
8. *Reflect and analyze information and communication platforms with appropriate mindset and attitude.*

*MIL looks to nourish the ability to search, evaluate, create and share information and media content wisely.* (UNDP – SELECT Project, 2023)

The four categories of MIL definitions offer valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of MIL and its diverse perspectives within the field. It underscores the need for a holistic approach that considers theoretical frameworks, factual knowledge, practical skills, and their interplay in promoting MIL among individuals and communities.

The results of this research study are presented in the following table (Table 1):

Table 1. Classifications of MIL definitions. (Source: Own creation)

No	Classification	Explanation
1.	<b>Theory-based definitions of MIL</b>	This category focuses on definitions that emphasize theoretical frameworks and concepts in understanding MIL. It examines how MIL is rooted in theories related to media studies and information science. Comprehending MIL requires individual to consider theoretical perspectives.
2.	<b>Knowledge-based definitions of MIL</b>	This classification centres on definitions that prioritize the acquisition and application of knowledge related to media and information. It investigates how MIL is linked to the understanding of media content, information sources, and critical evaluation of information. Knowledge serves as a foundation for MIL.
3.	<b>Skill-based definitions of MIL</b>	This category encompasses definitions that primarily focus on the development and application of specific MIL-relevant skills. It explores the skillsets required to effectively navigate and engage with media and information. The are various skills, such as media literacy, digital literacy, and information evaluation, that are essential for MIL.
4.	<b>Knowledge and skill-based definitions of MIL</b>	This category combines both knowledge and skill components to provide a comprehensive understanding of MIL. It examines how these two aspects intersect and complement each other in achieving MIL competence. Integrating knowledge and skills fosters effective media and information literacy.

Through an analysis of theory-based, knowledge-based, skill-based, and knowledge and skill-based definitions, the present study offers valuable insights into the multidimensional nature of MIL. These findings contribute to the ongoing discourse on the conceptualization and promotion of MIL that emphasize the importance of considering various perspectives and components within the field.

Overall, this analysis provides a foundation for further research and policymaking in the field of MIL to facilitate a deeper understanding of its core components and its implications for education, communication, and social development.

The classifications offer a comprehensive understanding of media and information literacy that highlights the importance of theoretical understanding, factual knowledge, and practical skills in the field. Such an insight can be of use to educators, policymakers, and practitioners in developing and implementing effective MIL programs. By recognizing and incorporating these diverse aspects of media and information literacy, stakeholders can work towards enhancing individuals' ability to access, evaluate, and utilize media and information.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 The Umbrella Term of Media Literacy and Information Literacy

Media literacy, a study that emerged around the 1970s, traditionally focuses on the analysis and the delivery of information through various forms of media. Prior to the 1990s, the primary focus of information literacy was research skills.

- Between 1930 and 1955 ‘the better broadcasting’ principle resulted in the term media literacy.
- In 1974, the term ‘information literacy’ was coined by Paul Zurkoskwi.
- In 1982, the Grunwald Declaration stated that “political and educational systems need to recognize their obligations to promote their citizens’ understanding of the phenomena of communication”.
- In 1997, Paul Gilster introduced ‘digital literacy’ to refer to people’s understanding and use of information through various digital sources.
- In 2008, UNESCO proposed the umbrella term ‘media and information literacy’ to embrace all the previously mentioned developments above and to refer to information, media and technological competencies (Shnurenko et al., 2020: 31).

MIL combines both media literacy and information literacy to unite scattered ideas into a cohesive framework. The convergence of these literacies is essential for enhancing interaction within the media environment. Despite the importance of establishing a unified vision and emphasizing MIL competencies encompassing knowledge, attitudes, abilities, and skills, this convergence is yet to occur. While some individuals lean towards journalism, others are drawn to information and library activities.

### 5.2 Similarities and Differences between ML and IL

There are more differences than similarities between the fields of information literacy and media literacy. While there is some overlap between these domains, media literacy is not simply a component of information literacy, and neither is information literacy simply a component of media literacy. ML and IL originate from distinct academic traditions, and each field has its own set of concerns and contributes for educating individuals and enhancing literacy levels (Lee & So, 2014: 144).

Table 2. Similarities and differences between ML and IL (Source: own creation)

<b>Information literacy differences</b>	<b>Information and media literacy similarities</b>	<b>media literacy differences</b>
...is the ability to identify a need for information and locate, evaluate, and use information to solve a problem.	Both are geared towards cultivating literate individuals who can make informed judgments regarding the use of information in the digital age.	...is the ability to access, evaluate, manipulate, and produce media in a variety of forms.
...is a much larger field than media literacy that has a clear but narrow focus on library science and technology.	Both share common goals and future directions.	...has a broader scope and is more related to communication, health-related issues, leisure, effects, and culture.
...is more related to information storage, processing, and use.	Both emphasize the use of multimedia platforms and knowledge creation.	...is more concerned with media content, media industry, and social effects.

With advancements in the information age and the fields of ML and IL, emerging views and research began to envisage attaining more efficiency by merging the two fields into one field.

“The experts in these two fields should seek to learn from each other and to understand the specifics of the other field. In today’s world, neither information literacy nor media literacy alone is sufficient to equip individuals to deal with the huge volume of media messages and the abundance of information platforms. There is an urgent call to combine these two fields to develop a joint set of MIL competencies needed in the new technological environment. Their integration could certainly facilitate individuals’ participation in the emerging knowledge societies” (Lee & So, 2014: 144).

The emergence of the concept of "media and information literacy" (MIL), which combined the approaches of information literacy and media literacy, took place in the late 2000s - early 2010s. In the mid-2010s, MIL specialists faced new challenges because of the technological revolution. Since the media environment has already undergone significant changes in the present, it is possible that more changes are expected in the future. Hence corresponding MIL competencies should be regularly updated possibly with the help of a common paradigm in the field of MIL.

UNESCO integrates information literacy and media literacy into Media Information Literacy (MIL). MIL is crucial for equipping individuals with critical insights into media operations, information systems, and their content. Initially treated as separate disciplines, these areas converged following technological advancements and interdisciplinary research. Today, students and researchers require a unique blend of competencies encompassing knowledge, skills, and attitudes for their endeavors (Ramaiah & Rao, 2021: 1).

Despite appearing distinct, media literacy and information literacy share a unified objective of enhancing individuals' capacity to access, comprehend, utilize, and generate media content or information (Lee & So, 2014: 138).

Globally MIL has evolved from an initial focus on media education in the 1980s to the exploration of media literacy and information literacy in the 2000s as a result of the media education process (Kukier, 2020: 97).

Various perspectives on MIL emphasize its role in enhancing individuals' information skills or molding them into socially engaged, participatory citizens in democratic societies. These perspective highlight MIL’s pivotal role in fostering media-literate individuals adept at navigating the rapidly evolving global information landscape.

MIL encompasses essential competencies for citizens to engage effectively with media and other information sources, facilitating socialization, nurturing active citizenship, fostering critical thinking, and promoting lifelong learning. Media literacy empowers individuals to think critically, create content, communicate effectively, and actively participate in society (Mihailidis, 2018: 154).

In recent years, scientists have defined MIL as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, utilize, and create media content and information while exercising critical thinking and ethical judgment.

#### 5.4 MIL Definitions of International Organizations and Institutions

**UNESCO.** UNESCO has played a pivotal role in developing an understanding of MIL at the international level (Reineck & Lublinski, 2015: 2). UNESCO, for the last 40 years or so, has been a leading organization in contributing to and improving critical MIL competencies among people.

MIL consist of media and information access and retrieval skills, understanding and evaluating media, as well as creating and utilizing information and media products (UNESCO, 2013: 49).

UNESCO defines MIL as follows (2013): “MIL is a set of competencies that empowers citizens to access, retrieve, understand, evaluate and use, create as well as share information and media content in all formats, using various tools, in a critical, ethical, and effective way, in order to participate and engage in personal, professional, and societal activities” (29 p.).

UNESCO combines information literacy and media literacy into MIL; a combination that is essential in empowering people with critical knowledge about media functions, information systems, and their content (Singh and Ramaiah, 2021). The director of the UNESCO Chair for MIL for Quality Journalism José Manuel Pérez Tornero talks about the importance of MIL and emphasizes its interactive aspects in the development of quality journalism and information exchange in society:

*“There will be no quality journalism without citizens’ quality participation in the public conversation... no good journalism can flourish without citizens with sufficient media and information literacy. Nor will there be good human conversation if part of the group remains silent”* (Muratova et al., 2019: 7).

When studying the UNESCO MIL definitions, it is important to pay attention to two important aspects:

- The term "information and media literacy" is used by UNESCO to differentiate from the existing study of information literacy.

Grizzle & Singh (2016:31) admits: “UNESCO proposes that we take the union, or the complete set of media and information competencies offered by ML and IL; thereby combining these two formerly distinct areas under one umbrella term: MIL. It is crucial that as we seek to empower children, youth, and citizens, in general to universalize books and the Internet, MIL must be considered as a combination of interrelated media and information competencies (knowledge, skills and attitudes)”.

- UNESCO has developed a set of indicators to assess MIL development in national policies and programs and a set of competencies to guide curriculum development, implementation, and assessment in schools (Alagaran, 2015: 32).

UNESCO has intensified its commitment to the topic of MIL, based on the conviction “that the cultivation of a media- and information-literate population is essential for the sustainable development of society, requiring the individual person, community, and nation at large to obtain a diverse range of competencies” (UNESCO, 2013: 31).

Singh and Ramaiah (2021) wrote: *“UNESCO is now promoting the composite concept of MIL. To promote MIL and MIL research, it has founded the MIL Alliance and the MIL and Intercultural Dialogue (MILID UniTwin) to enable people to use information critically, ethically and legally in quality decision-making. Other useful initiatives of UNESCO include “MIL MOOC; Media and Information Literacy: Critical-thinking, Creativity, Literacy, Intercultural, Citizenship, Knowledge and Sustainability (MIL CLICKS); MIL Policy and Strategy Guidelines; MIL Curriculum for Teachers; MIL Indicators; MIL Framework; and MIL Week Feature Conference and Youth Agenda Forum”* (237 p.).

MIL is the most important set of competencies for individuals worldwide to comprehend the complexities of their contemporary environment and equip themselves for an improved future.. This major theme has been relentlessly approached by UNESCO, which produced a set of fundamental documents to guide people and nations towards MIL’s adoption and dissemination (Doyle, 2019:116).

Various UNESCO publications about MIL emphasize that media and information-literate citizens can access, receive, critically evaluate, create, use, and disseminate information and media content of all forms.

**The Council of Europe.** The Council of Europe has set MIL within institutional frameworks. MIL guidelines are included in many of the organisation’s standard-setting instruments for states, policymakers and several other public and private actors with competencies to participate and collaborate within a fast-evolving digital environment. MIL is regarded as an inherent part of regulations and/or policies in areas such as education and lifelong learning, children and youth, media, and information society, etc.

MIL is the main tool for empowering people, communities, and nations to participate in and contribute to global knowledgeable societies. In the view of the Council of Europe, it is of utmost importance that individuals develop cognitive, technical and social skills and capacities to effectively access and critically analyze media content; to make informed decisions about which media they use and how to use them; to understand the ethical implications of media and new technologies, and to communicate effectively in different ways including creating content.

MIL encompasses the capacity to interpret, comprehend, and creatively engage with digital media as critical thinkers. Becoming media and information literate is a process that necessitates education and continuous interaction with our surroundings. It goes beyond mere proficiency in using various media or being informed about various topics. A digital citizen must adopt a mindset grounded in critical thinking to actively and meaningfully contribute to his or her community. (Richardson and Milovidov, 2019:13)

MIL brings together three distinct dimensions: Information Literacy, Media Literacy, along with ICT and Digital Literacy.

**The Council of Europe has taken a two-fold approach to MIL:**

- First to set MIL within institutional frameworks.

- Second to provide tools for empowering individual media users of all ages and walks of life.

As MIL is relevant to the exercise of many human rights, both in offline and online format, the Council of Europe has provided several instruments, policies, studies, and activities aimed at improving MIL levels across Europe in the past two decades.

**DW Akademie.** MIL, defined as the ability to access, analyse, and create media, is a prerequisite for citizens to realize their rights to freedom of information and expression.

DW Akademie, together with dedicated local partners, has been working on MIL in more than 29 countries around the world. DW Akademie's MIL projects tackle the current contamination of the public sphere with misinformation, hate speech and online threats.

MIL aims to empower individuals with the necessary competencies and abilities to interact responsibly and proficiently with media platforms and information networks. This fosters the development of active and discerning citizens capable of meaningfully engaging in civic activities and democratic processes. (Reineck, 2015).

Media development supports MIL projects that help people make their own choices and realize their human rights. To this end, MIL projects may include training and skill-oriented workshops. But MIL projects need to work on other levels, too, such as supporting structural reforms on behalf of informed and active citizens.

International organizations mainly follow traditional approaches when defining MIL and its main concepts in their manuals and websites; this has also been observed on the DW Akademie website, and its publications. However, several original approaches and "discoveries" are present in DW Akademie organization's website. One of them is the MIL unchained project. In the MIL unchained project, prominent scientists, and experts in the field of ML and MIL in the world "enter into a debate". They answer questions posed by one of their colleagues and pose questions to other colleagues. As a result, an original and pluralistic answer to MIL and its main terms, solutions to problems are found.

*"In the #mediadev question chain, experts share their thoughts on a specific issue by answering to a question put forward by a peer. They contribute in the form of a short text, but also by posing a new question as well as by suggesting a colleague who is then contacted."* (DW Akademie, 2018)

*The first question, put forward by #mediadev, has been answered by DW Akademie's Dennis Reineck: **How can MIL contribute to tackle disinformation?***

*Dennis Reineck's brought up the following questions for Jordi Torrent from the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations: **What contribution can MIL make in countering extremism and radicalization?***

*Jordi Torrent had a question for Renee Hobbs, Professor of Communication Studies at the Harrington School of Communication and Media: **Would you see MIL included in the mandatory curriculum of primary and secondary schools? If yes, how? If not, why?***

*Renee Hobbs forwarded the following question to her colleague Sonia Livingstone, Professor of Social Psychology at the London School of Economics and Political Science: **How does MIL both empower and protect children and young people?***

The above approach has resulted in DW Akademie overseeing very advanced in projects in the field of MIL and striving to find practical solutions to modern problems.

DW Akademie's expert Dennis Reineck's definition of MIL can be cited as an example of a practical (holistic) definition:

"MIL enables citizens to reflect on these experiences, much in the same way that doctors and nutritional experts help people reflect on how their way of living affects their health. Making people conscious of their information habits and choices and encouraging them to speak out if what they get served from friends or media is informational "junk food", are key to making sure that people are getting the information they can trust and base their decisions upon" (DW Akademie, 2018).

### 5.5 Other Terms for MIL

A variety of new terms (cyberliteracy, new literacies, digital literacy, web literacy, transliteracy, etc.) have been suggested to update and revamp the concept of media literacy and address changes in technology and new approaches to the creation, distribution and dissemination of media messages. As more stakeholders find appeal in the concept of media literacy, each group seeks to name it to reflect their distinctive interests.

Lee & So (2014) in their article "Media Literacy and Information Literacy: Similarities and Differences" provide interesting information about the names of MIL suggested by various scholars in the field of media and information literacy:

"When computer technology converged with media technology in the 1990s," which was referred to by Koelsch (1995) as the "infomedia revolution," "there was already a call for expanding the concept of media literacy to encompass infomedia literacy" (Lee, 1999). As "the Internet further advances," people need to acquire "the skills and competencies of multiple literacies" (Buckingham, 2007; Westby, 2010). Various concepts, such as "multiliteracies" (New London Group, 1996) and "multimodality" (Kress, 2003), have been proposed to address this need.

In the current study, we came across many new terms. For example, due to challenges presented by the Internet age, Hobbs (2010: 23) discusses the concept of digital and media literacy and includes "using information search and evaluation strategies" in her proposed curriculum outline.

Some suggested terms for MIL field related to the internet age are listed subsequently.

**Electracy.** Educator Gregory Ulmer defined the field of MIL as "electracy". "Electracy" describes a type of "literacy" or skill and facility necessary to exploit the full communicative potential of new electronic media such as multimedia, hypermedia, social software, and virtual worlds.

Theorist Gregory Ulmer (2003) states that electracy "is to digital media what literacy is to print." It encompasses the broader cultural, institutional, pedagogical, and ideological implications inherent to the transition from a culture of print literacy to a culture saturated with electronic media. "Electracy" is the term he gives to what is resulting from this major transition that our society is undergoing. The term is a portmanteau word, combining "electricity" with "trace," to allude to one of the fundamental terms used by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida to name the relational spacing that enables and delimits any signification in any medium (which is to say that it operates in orality and literacy as much as in electracy). Usage parallels "literacy": a person may be literate or illiterate, electrate or anelectrate (Ulmer, *The Chora Collaborations...*, no date).

As such, electracy denotes a broad spectrum of research possibilities including the history and invention of writing and mnemonic practices, the epistemological and ontological changes resulting from such practices, the sociological and psychological implications of a networked culture, and the pedagogical implementation of practices derived from such explorations.

Tyner (1998) distinguished between two types of literacies:

1. Tool literacies that emphasize the knowledge and competencies involved in using digital media; these are undoubtedly important core skills for participating in contemporary culture today.

2. Representational literacies (which include information literacy, media literacy and visual literacy) that emphasize access, analysis, reflection, and social action competencies associated with specific types of symbol systems.

Representational literacies enable people to identify author purpose, target audience, bias, and point of view, and support engagement in active critical thinking about the messages that we both produce and consume as part of daily life. Representational literacies can be particularly effective in building empathy toward members of particular social groups (Hobbs et al., 2011: 26).

**Metaliteracy.** This term was suggested by the scholars Mackey and Jacobson (2010) in their article "Reframing Information Literacy as a Metaliteracy". According to them, the term metaliteracy lays a foundation for media literacy, digital literacy, ICT literacy, and visual literacy. While information literacy prepares individuals to access, evaluate, and analyse information, metaliteracy prepares individuals to actively produce and share content through social media and online communities. Metaliteracy requires an understanding of new media tools and original digital information that are necessary for media literacy, digital literacy, and ICT literacy (Mackey and Jacobson, 2010: 76)

Carbo (2013) proposes the use of "metaliteracy" as a bigger umbrella to combine the many different competencies needed in the new society. Information literacy is central to this theoretical construct which includes media and other literacies as components (97-99 pp.).

**Infocommunicative literacy.** Infocommunicative literacy refers to the ability to effectively navigate, comprehend, and critically evaluate information and communication technologies (ICT), including digital media, the internet, social networks, and other digital platforms. It encompasses skills such as digital literacy, media literacy, information literacy, and communication skills, enabling individuals to responsibly create, access, analyze, and communicate information in today's digital age.

Borges (2018) theoretically positions the term "infocommunicative literacy" by elucidating its foundation on three principal pillars: Information Literacy, New Media Literacy (NML), and Metaliteracy. Through the systematic integration of these three concepts, Borges proposes a conceptual framework accompanied by practical application propositions. Infocommunicative literacy necessitates not only proficiency in information literacy but also the aptitude for interactive communication and relational skills.

**Digital MIL (DMIL).** Scholars Reineck and Lublinski define this term as a more advanced term than ML and MIL. New media require the user to adopt a more active, “lean-forward role” than in traditional “lean-back media” contexts. All these developments have led to a resurgence of the media literacy debate. Citizens need Digital MIL (DMIL) to actively take on a lean-forward role.

DMIL refers to a collection of knowledge, abilities, and mindsets that enhance and enrich interactions with digital media and information resources in an active, participatory fashion. It expands upon conventional MIL notions by acknowledging citizens' ability to collaborate and enhance the volume and caliber of information dissemination within society. Moreover, digital media environments are characterized by their complexity, surpassing the traditional one-way flow of information seen in traditional media platforms. Online comments, forums, and particularly social media platforms serve to complement, and occasionally even replace, the information dominance once held by professional journalism (Reineck and Lublinski, 2015: 3).

Based on the current research study’s findings, we developed the following classifications of new terms for MIL (Table 3):

Table 3. Other terms for MIL (Source: own creation)

#	Recommended term (name)	Scholars
1.	Infomedia literacy	F.Koelsch (1995); A.Y.L. Lee (1999).
2.	Multiliteracies	New London Group (1996); Westby, C. (2010).
3.	Electracy	G. L.Ulmer (2003),
4.	Multimodality	G.Kress (2003)
5.	Multiple literacies	D.Buckingham (2007)
6.	Digital and media literacy	R.Hobbs (2010)
7.	Metaliteracy	Th.P.Mackey, T.Jacobson (2010); T.Carbo (2013)
8.	Digital MIL	D.Reineck, J.Lublinski (2015)
9.	Infocommunicative literacy	J.Borges (2018)

**6. Conclusion**

MIL is a comprehensive "umbrella concept" that includes Information Literacy and Media literacy and other literacy levels within them. MIL is a composite set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enables and empowers citizens to competently and critically engage with media and information. In today's era of rapid development of information, internet, and media technologies, MIL provides essential knowledge and skills for living for every citizen, regardless of his or her country of residence or its developmental status. A person can only live safely in modern society by developing his or her MIL. MIL plays an extremely important role in all aspects of a person's life.

MIL includes a set of knowledge about the most important information distribution methods and about media industry, manipulation technologies, disinformation, misinformation, cyberbullying, hacking, trolling, and SMM technologies, which are widely popular today.

Through improving MIL, a person learns to protect himself and his loved ones from various threats such as information attacks, cyberbullying, and hacking. MIL knowledge is needed by everyone to prevent the misuse of personal information, and financial resources, and to maintain freedom of speech and opinion, which is invaluable to every person.

Since the MIL knowledge is comprehensive, it cannot be acquired at once. But if a person wants to be a "citizen" of the information and technology age with rights equal to those of other people, he or she must acquire MIL knowledge regardless of his or her profession and field.

Today, many young people are earning money as bloggers by simply traveling different places and distributing information on You-Tube channels with no training in journalism portraying the universal nature of the MIL.

MIL is a field that can filter the flow of information that is continuously transmitted to it by various information channels and the people around us, guarantee our security in the digital world, and, where possible serve as an opportunity to earn an additional income.

The qualitative approach used in the current study explored and defined concepts of media and information literacy through a comprehensive analysis of existing literature interviews and discussions with experts to identify key elements and characteristics that contribute to these literacies.

Study findings suggest that media literacy encompasses the ability to critically analyse and evaluate media content to understand its production processes and to engage in responsible and informed media consumption. On the other hand, information literacy involves skills in locating evaluating and effectively utilizing information in an ethical manner.

These definitions emphasize the importance of empowering individuals to navigate and actively participate in the digital

age. Media and information literacies are no longer optional skills; they are essential for individuals to fully engage in society and make informed decisions.

In conclusion MIL play a crucial role in today's digitally connected world. Embracing these literacies enables individuals to become active responsible and informed digital citizens. MIL is essential for educators, policymakers, and society who should all recognize its significance and work collaboratively to promote its development and integration.

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