

## MEDIA LITERCY AND INFORMATION LITERACY: CONCEPTUAL CONVERGENCE INTO A COMPOSITE NOTION OF MIL

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**Abstract.** *Researchers, educationalists, educational policy-makers, education technologists have been recently focusing much of their attention on what it means to be literate in a densely mediated society. Therefore, we have raised the following questions: what has the conception of literacy – just as a mere ability to encode / decode a text – developed into today? What aspects are considered to be most pertinent to literacy as a complex phenomenon in contemporary research? What is the rationale behind combining two concepts – information literacy and media literacy – into the complex notion of media and information literacy (MIL)? The method applied in this research is state-of-the-art review which addresses current matters in comparison with previous research. In this paper, we have drawn much on institutional definitions of media literacy and information literacy (those adopted by UNESCO and the European Commission). The conceptual frameworks of these entities have been considered along with academic research in the field of literacy. Skilfully filtering information and critically appraising its quality – in any kind of messages and in any type of media – is vital. Synthesizing overlapping types has proved to be useful because overarching composite concepts like media and information literacy well reflect the complex nature of mediated world and encompass the needed skills, knowledge and attitude towards various sources of information and information quality.*

**Key words:** *information literacy, media literacy, media and information literacy, technologization, convergence of concepts*

## Introduction

Digital technologies – and Web 2.0 in particular – have substantially changed the way we communicate and learn. Therefore, it is only natural that researchers, educationalists, educational policy-makers, education technologists have been focusing their attention on what it means to be literate in a densely mediated, networking and technologized society of nowadays. The origins of the term literacy lie at the end of the 19th century. In the beginning, the concept implied merely the ability to decode and encode text. Since then the conception has been expanding and getting more complex, and this change has always been related with the technological development of society.

As a result, numerous researchers have started constructing their own theories and terminology to label their own perceptions of what it means to be literate nowadays. But the problem with all this theorizing is that finally we come up with complicated sets of terms that in fact grapple with the same phenomenon but focus on different angles and operate within varying scopes of the concept. Thus, in academic literature, we come across such terms as information literacy, digital literacy/literacies, new literacies, media literacy, critical literacy/literacies, new media literacy, technology literacy, visual literacy, ICT literacy, multimodal literacy/literacies, multiple literacies, metaliteracies, online literacy, transliteracy, web-based literacy, political literacy, financial literacy, health literacy, etc.

Recently, considerable discussions have been focusing on the umbrella concept of media and information literacy proposed in UNESCO documents explicating this multi-faceted concept and related issues.

Therefore, in this paper, we have raised these questions: what has the conception of literacy – just as a mere ability to encode / decode a text – developed into today? What aspects are considered to be most pertinent to literacy as a complex phenomenon in contemporary research? What is the rationale behind combining two concepts – information literacy and media literacy – into the complex notion of media and information literacy?

The object of the research is the composite concept of media and information literacy.

The purpose of the research is to substantiate the rationale behind convergence of different components of literacy under the umbrella notion of media and information literacy.

The objectives:

1. To review most recent research into the phenomenon of literacy, its multi-faceted nature, existing academic definitions, explications and approaches to it.
2. To analyse the issues most closely related to the intricacy of the concept of literacy in terms of ubiquitous technologization.
3. To reveal the rationale behind the combining of the terms media literacy and information literacy into the composite concept of media and information literacy.

The method applied in this research is state-of-the-art review. This type of review addresses “more current matters in contrast to other combined retrospective and current approaches.” Within this methodology, the analysis centres on “the state of knowledge and priorities for future investigation and research.”

In this paper, we build on the premise that the composite UNESCO concept media and information literacy encompasses the essence of all prior discourse on information literacy, media literacy and other literacies and reflects the state-of-the-art in the field. Researchers have been operating with a number of terms until now and therefore the situation was becoming rather complicated as, just like in any field, ample, varying and overlapping terminology is a hindrance: what researchers and practitioners in the field of literacy need is concise definitions that aid in understanding rather than complicate a researched phenomenon every time a newly-coined (and often superfluous) concept is introduced just to point to one or more of the inherent and related properties. Therefore, we start with discussing the notion of information literacy (which is more or less established in academic and public discourse), continue with an overview of what the term media literacy covers today and, finally, explain the rationale for the adoption of the composite term media and information literacy.

## 1. Information literacy (IL)

The idea of information literacy emerged with the advent of information technologies in the early 1970s (Bruce, Virkus). Virkus draws on the majority of publications that have come from the industrialised, English-speaking countries, especially from the United States and Australia. Information literacy is determined by present time realities related to the development of state-of-the-art technology and abundance of information. Moreover, IL has been viewed as a contemporary phenomenon, changing the quality of life, work and education. In the context of integration of IL in education, it is gaining attention as a relevant issue which closely overlaps with the use of ICTs in the knowledge construction process. Meanwhile, information literacy skills are referred to as fundamental in all types of learning: formal / non-formal, continuing, permanent, open / flexible, etc.

Over several decades, the conducted research into information literacy has been manifested in three types of its understanding: 1) competence-based approach; 2) experience-based approach; 3) learning-based approach. These approaches are discussed in this section.

The metaphor of information explosion, describing such utterances as information overload and data smog, is a phenomenon of a modern society, which is being influenced by another phenomenon called emergence of information anxiety (Candy ; Kapitzke). From this perspective, information literacy is emphasized as a relevant response to information overload (Candy , Bruce , Bruce).

In Europe, scholarly discussion on information literacy has evolved from library instruction, bibliographic instruction, and user / reader education.

As early as 1989, the National Information Literacy Forum (USA) provided the information literate person's definition: "The information literate person is able to understand the information needs, to locate, evaluate, and effectively use information".

In 2003, the Information for Development Forum's meeting (held to discuss the topic of information literacy in the context of the United Nations' preparations for the

World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)) approached IL as the information society's need:

A new culture is emerging, based on symbols, codes, models, programs, formal languages, algorithms, virtual representations, mental landscapes, which imply the need for a new 'information literacy'.

Numerous definitions of IL emphasise the complexity of the issue; the oldest one was presented by the American Library Association:

Information literacy is a set of abilities requiring an individual to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information.

There are certain elements that link all the definitions of information literacy: understanding the information need, information search, its use, evaluation, application for personal needs, and communication. The diversified understanding of the concept has been researched by Vaičiūnienė, Vaičiūnienė, Mažeikienė and Valūnaitė Oleškevičienė. IL has been interchangeably identified as computer or IT literacy, electronic, media, net, hyper or internet, digital literacy or even informacy. Bawden and Robinson, Eisenberg et al give a comparative analysis of these concepts, considering a broad and deep scope of the term covering all the above mentioned concepts.

Skill-based literacies (computer, IT, electronic, etc.) characterise abilities for a particular area, for example, to work with a computer or search for information in a library. Conversely, information literacy defines much more general abilities such as self-directed learning, abilities to utilise a variety of information resources and formats, have deep understanding and knowledge of the information world, and internalise values that motivate ethical and legal information use. The conception of information literacy incorporates other literacies necessary in the modern society. Some authors argue that different ideas of information literacy and often too narrow interpretation of the concept encourages students' surface approach to learning, for example, understanding information literacy as library instruction. Thus, information literacy being a more general concept, embraces more specific literacies of a particular area. A very broad understanding of information literacy seen in isolation from the learning process is also criticized (Johnson and Webber, Johnson and Webber, Bruce, Lupton, Bawden, Bundy). The significance of the term is associated with complexity of information environment, information products, and digital space.. Generality of the concept covering computer skills, description of cognitive and metacognitive abilities in the light of learning to learn philosophy is criticized too. These arguments confirm the complexity, ambiguity and scope of the term underlying it as an object of scientific discussions among researchers from different domains (librarians, educationalists, practitioners, psychologists, etc.) (Figure 1).

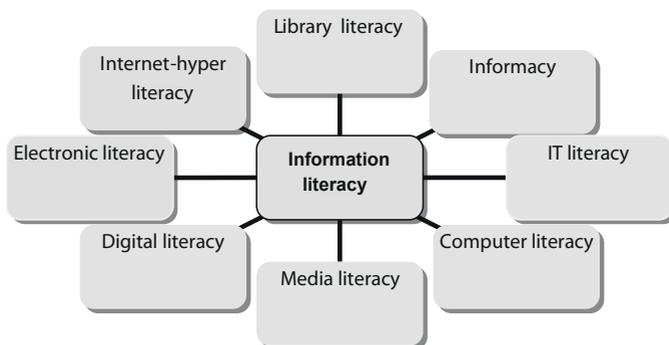


Figure 1. Information literacy: the concept

Further research on IL has been evidencing close relationship between learning and information literacy. The findings of numerous studies imply the issue of awareness of IL as contextual knowledge creation. In line with this aspect of IL and the point of view of Bruce et al<sup>1</sup>, Forster<sup>2</sup> discusses the notion of informed learning:

IL is something experienced in, and transferable to, a range of contexts and settings, and is fundamental to the learning process as a transformative generator of knowledge<sup>3</sup>.

Forster<sup>4</sup> modifies the previous definitions stating that information literacy is always in the development of specific, contextual knowledge:

An information-literate person can demonstrate an awareness of how they gather, use, manage and synthesise information and data in an ethical manner in the development of their contextual knowledge and understanding ... and [has] the information skills to do so effectively.<sup>5</sup>

Brooks<sup>6</sup> researches information literacy in the light of connectivism emphasising the increasing mobility of learning due to extensive use of mobile technological devices. The processes of contextualising and creating new knowledge in a digital age have been reflected in a revised definition of IL generated by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL)<sup>7</sup>:

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- 1 Bruce, C. et al. Diversifying information literacy research: an informed learning perspective. In: Bruce et al. (Eds) *Information experience: approaches to theory and practice*. London: Emerald, 2014, pp. 169-189.
  - 2 Forster, M. Refining the definition of information literacy: the experience of contextual knowledge creation. *Journal of Information Literacy*, 2015, 9(1), pp. 62-73.
  - 3 *Ibid.*, p. 63.
  - 4 *Ibid.*
  - 5 *Ibid.*, p.71.
  - 6 Brooks, A. W. Using connectivism to guide information literacy instruction with tablets. *Journal of Information Literacy*, 2015, 9(2), pp. 27-36.
  - 7 Association of College and Research Libraries. *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education 2015* <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework> [accessed 10.09.2016]

IL is the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning<sup>8</sup>

The above reviewed approaches toward information literacy reflect the complexity of the concept depending on the context of its scholarly discussion and practical use. In many countries (USA, Australia, and New Zealand) as well as European countries, information literacy has been standardized in all levels of education. The standards (as an efficient tool for education development and improvement of study quality) serve as guidelines for assessment of students' competences.

## 2. Media literacy (ML)

For this research, we have adopted Potter's<sup>9</sup> approach to ML as most comprehensive: Potter<sup>10</sup> adopts a broad perspective and, bearing in mind the media-saturated world of today, this approach seems to be best substantiated. In its broadest sense, ML "is concerned with people's ability to access and process information from any form of transmission."<sup>11</sup> This is rather close to the early definition of literacy (dating back to the end of the 19th century) – as the ability to encode and decode a text that has been referred to above<sup>12</sup> – only that the latter definition introduces the notion of "transmission" which is one of the key concepts in electronic age. More importantly, Potter's<sup>13</sup> approach is a balanced approach: admitting the potential of negative media effects on individuals and societies, he builds on the premise that media can also bring about positive effects. More specifically, as regards literacy, Potter<sup>14</sup> admits that "literacy is about being skilled at assessing the meaning in any kind of messages, organizing that meaning so that it is useful, and then constructing messages to convey that meaning to others." What is obvious from this perspective is that a message (text) in any form or from any type of medium, communication of information, processing and appraisal of information and self-expression are closely inter-related processes. This point is very important for the consideration of the rationale behind the composite concept of media and information literacy that is discussed in more detail in Section 3 of this paper. Besides, "the three building blocks of media literacy", as Potter<sup>15</sup> calls them, are inter-linked with the three key elements of the UNESCO definition of media and information literacy.<sup>16</sup>

Hobbs<sup>17</sup>, one of the most prominent authors on digital and media literacy education, uses the composite concept of digital and media literacy in order to bring to the fore

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8 Ibid., p.3

9 Potter, W. J. *Media Literacy* 5th ed. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, 2011.

10 Ibid., pp. 12-26.

11 Ibid., p. 12.

12 Stordy, P. H. *Taxonomy of literacies*, p. 457.

13 Potter, W. J. p. 12.

14 Ibid., p. 12-13.

15 Potter, W. J. *Media Literacy*, pp. 12-19.

16 UNESCO *Media and Information Literacy: Policy and Strategy Guidelines*, 2013, p. 191.

17 Hobbs, R. *Digital and Media Literacy: A Plan of Action*. Washington: The Aspen Institute, 2010.

digitization as an inherent aspect in discourse about literacy, education, and other spheres of life. Digital literacy is “the ability to use computers, social media, and the Internet.”<sup>18</sup> Computers, social media (it is pertinent to note at this point that all new media nowadays are in fact social), and the Internet are becoming inherently related with all the ways we access information and construct our knowledge about the world – TV channels are becoming available for watching on mobile devices, newspapers are relocating into the digital world in order to save costs of print and distribution and access more readers, short videos are replacing lengthy analytical articles or TV programmes, telecommunication is converging with mobile technologies. Consequently, researchers are unsure about the fate of paper book as regards “serious reading”. Despite recurrent forecasts about the end of the print book, these forecasts are often unsubstantiated by serious research: on the contrary, according to some scholars, paper book is nevertheless preferred by overwhelming majority of students.<sup>19</sup> However, as it comes to mass communication media (such as TV, radio, newspapers and magazines, the Internet), “serious reading” is replaced by quick reading modes due to the exponentially growing amounts of information. Therefore, the digital aspect alone, though being an inherent element, does not entail much as regards a broader perspective defining what it means to be literate today. Hobbs<sup>20</sup> claims that her composite concept of digital and media literacy in her approach

[...] is used to encompass the full range of cognitive, emotional and social competencies that includes the use of texts, tools and technologies; the skills of critical thinking and analysis; the practice of message composition and creativity; the ability to engage in reflection and ethical thinking; as well as active participation through teamwork and collaboration. When people have digital and media literacy competencies, they recognize personal, corporate and political agendas and are empowered to speak out on behalf of the missing voices and omitted perspectives in our communities. By identifying and attempting to solve problems, people use their powerful voices and their rights under the law to improve the world around them.<sup>21</sup>

The highlight on the digital, though, is very important in terms of the wider societal problems such as the digital divide: not being able to use a computer and the Internet excludes people from adequate participation in society, quality education, access to various sources of information in the globalized and networked world.

In very general terms, literacy can be regarded as a cognitive ability and as a social practice.<sup>22</sup> Literacy just as a cognitive ability (of reading and writing) would not and

18 Hobbs, R., *Digital and Media Literacy: A Plan of Action*, p. 17

19 Naomi Baron in her 2016 book *Words on Screen: The Fate of Reading in a Digital World* (published in New York by Oxford University Press) describes her research of 300 college students from around the world of which 92 percent of the US students, 77 percent of Japanese students, and 95 percent of German students prefer hardcopy of a long schoolwork text (p. 85).

20 Hobbs, R. *op. cit.*, p. 17

21 *Ibid.*

22 Street, B. *Literacy in Theory and Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

could not reflect the complexity of what it means to be literate nowadays. Therefore, for some literacy researchers, digital technologies and social practices are fundamental. Livingstone, for instance, brings to the fore the Internet in her conception of literacy.<sup>23</sup> Understanding the Internet as a technological medium is essential. When back in 1964 Marshal McLuhan stated that media is the message, he sought to point out the essential role of any media, not the content, to shape and re-shape our worldview. The Internet with its reach and its ability to affect all spheres of human life should be studied as a medium in itself. Therefore, understanding audience reception and media effects are an integral part of understanding how media construct our worldview and knowledge. Livingstone in her more recent publications refers to ML as encompassing the skills subsumed by the Internet literacy.<sup>24</sup>

The European Commission (EC) in its call for proposals in the field of ML defines it as “an umbrella expression that includes all technical, cognitive, social, civic and creative capacities that allow a citizen to access the media, to have a critical understanding of the media and to interact with it”<sup>25</sup> “Media” is understood broadly here as “including all kind of media (television, radio, press) and through all kind of channels (traditional, internet, social media).<sup>26</sup> Roberto Viola, head of the Directorate-General for Communications, Networks, Content and Technology of the EC, in his opening speech in Media and Learning Conference that took place in Brussels on 10 March, 2016, paid attention to the changing media landscape and approaches to media literacy.<sup>27</sup> A rise in interest in ML, according to Viola<sup>28</sup>, has been sparked by 3 inter-related reasons:

First, media literacy is intrinsic to a healthy democracy. Second, media literacy is a necessary response to a changing and increasingly complex media landscape. Third, media literacy is an element in key discussions in recent months in the fight against radicalisation and respect and promotion of fundamental rights.<sup>29</sup>

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23 Livingstone, S. Internet literacy: young people's negotiation of new online opportunities in McPherson, T. (Ed.), *Unexpected Outcomes and Innovative Uses of Digital Media by Youth*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, pp. 101-122.

24 Livingstone, S. Media Literacy for All? On the Intellectual and Political Challenges of Implementing Media Literacy Policy, pp. 31-36 in Livingstone, Sonia (Ed.) *Media Literacy: Ambitions, Policies and Measures*. London: COST ISO906: Transforming Audiences, Transforming Societies <http://www.cost-transforming-audiences.eu/node/223> [accessed 12.10.2015]; Livingstone, S., Grandío, M., Wijnen, C., Costa, C., and Papaioannou, T. (2013) Situating media literacy in the changing media environment: critical insights from European research on audiences. In Carpentier, N., Schroeder, K., and Hallett, L. (Eds.), *Audience Transformations: Shifting Audience Positions in Late Modernity*, Bristol: Intellect, pp. 210-227.

25 Call for proposals – Pilot Project „Media literacy for all“ p. 1. <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/pilot-project-media-literacy-all> [accessed 09.10.2016].

26 Ibid.

27 Viola, R., „Media literacy from the EU perspective: how to empower citizens with critical thinking towards the media?“, opening speech in Media and Learning Conference, 10 March 2016, Brussels. <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/media-literacy-background-documents> [accessed 09.10.2016].

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

Generally speaking, the EC definition regards ML as fundamental in tackling key societal issues, promoting fundamental rights, combating hate speech online, enabling citizens to spot propaganda and to become critical users of information.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, critical thinking is seen as a pillar in educating responsible and aware individuals. The same document defines critical thinking as including, “[...] among other skills, the ability to distinguish information from propaganda, to deconstruct media communication and to interact with social media in a mindful way.”<sup>31</sup>

Following extensive academic research, institutional publications, increased interest of educational policy-makers and those concerned with education, both theorists and practitioners alike, it has become clear that media literacy has to be considered in relation to national contexts and national education systems acknowledging the necessity to integrate media education into teaching curricula. Among the most recent and comprehensive publications about media literacy and education in national contexts are those by Marta-Lazo and Grandío Pérez<sup>32</sup>, Lee and So<sup>33</sup>, Gutiérrez and Tyner<sup>34</sup>, Tiede and Graffe<sup>35</sup>, Duoblienė<sup>36</sup> and others.

### 3. Media and information literacy (MIL)

UNESCO publications about the composite concept of MIL<sup>37</sup> evoked a response from researchers and practitioners: these publications came just in time, when academic discussions about contemporary understanding of literacy have turned into something reminding one of the modern Tower of Babel, when various terminological sets have been used to talk about the same concept, i.e. literacy as a multi-faceted phenomenon conditioned by a number of factors such as the ubiquity of technologies in our life; the necessity of life-long learning brought about by the capitalist, globalised and consumerist society; the exponentially growing amounts of information in the densely mediated world. One important development regarding the nature of today’s Web 2.0-based media is that they are acquiring certain features of social media (which are defined by Kaplan and Haenlein<sup>38</sup> “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and

30 Call for proposals – Pilot Project „Media literacy for all“ p. 2.

31 Ibid. p. 2

32 Marta-Lazo, C., Grandío-Perez, M. Critical insights in media literacy research in Spain: educational and political challenges. *Medijske Studije / Media Studies*, 2012, 3(6), pp. 139-151.

33 Lee, A. Y. L., So, C. Y. K. Media Literacy and Information Literacy: Similarities and Differences. *Comunicar*, 2014, 42 Vol. 21, pp. 137-145.

34 Gutiérrez, A., Tyner, K. Media education, media literacy and digital competence. *Comunicar*, 2012, 38 Vol. 19, pp. 31-39.

35 Tiede, J., Graffe, S. Media pedagogy in German and U.S. teacher education [Pedagogía mediática en la formación de profesores de Alemania y EEUU]. *Comunicar*, 2016, 49, pp. 19-28.

36 Duoblienė, L. Medijų raštingumo ugdymas: globaliosios tendencijos ir lietuviškojo kelio paieškos. *Santalka. Filologija. Edukologija*, 2010, 18(2), pp. 16-28.

37 These documents can be accessed at <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/media-development/media-literacy/publications/>.

38 Kaplan, A.M. and Haenlein, M. Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media, *Business Horizons*, 2010, Vol. 53 No. 1, pp. 59-68.

technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content”) in terms of user-involvement, interactivity, information (over-) sharing, appraisal of information quality, cross-checking facts, overwhelming number of users that can be reached online and other important issues.

UNESCO’s focal point in their publications is the empowerment of an individual. To quote Stordy<sup>39</sup>, “UNESCO perceives that new social media platforms have created a virtual second world which demands new competencies and understandings to effectively exploit opportunities and minimise the associated risks. However, rather than defining MIL, UNESCO focuses on key learning outcomes stating that “the myriad of definitions of information literacy, media literacy and other related literacies, which lead to confusion” (UNESCO, 2013, p. 13) They want MIL to be understood as a composite concept that unifies many literacy types and also encompasses knowledge, skills and attitudes.”

The UNESCO documents regarding MIL have provided clear guidelines as to what the organisation sees as vital in contemporary education, responsible citizenship, active participation in societal life, critical use of media information. Recently, attempts to re-define or introduce new terminology in the field of literacy have subsided as terminological abundance was hindering communication among researchers. As a composite concept, MIL highlights diversity and multi-faceted scope of literacy. Taken separately, each concept – information literacy and media literacy – contain the following elements:

*Table 1.* Key outcomes / elements of information literacy and media literacy as individual fields (Source: UNESCO Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers)<sup>40</sup>

Key outcomes / elements of information literacy						
Define and articulate information needs	Locate and access information	Assess information	Organize information	Make ethical use of information	Communicate information	Use ICT skills for information processing
Key outcomes / elements of media literacy						
Understand the role and functions of media in democratic societies	Understand the conditions under which media can fulfil their functions	Critically evaluate media content in the light of media functions	Engage with media for self-expression and democratic participation	Review skills (including ICTs) needed to produce user-generated content		

In the conceptual model of UNESCO’s Media and Information Literacy Policy and Strategy Guidelines, the composite MIL concept is described as a term that “[...] stands for media and information literacy, and refers to the essential competencies (knowledge, skills and attitude) that allow citizens to engage with media and other information providers

39 Stordy, P. H. Taxonomy of literacies, p. 465.

40 UNESCO Media and Information Literacy: Curriculum for Teachers, 2013, p. 18. <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/resources/publications-and-communication-materials/publications/full-list/media-and-information-literacy-curriculum-for-teachers/> [accessed 02.10.2016]

effectively and develop critical thinking and life-long learning skills for socializing and becoming active citizens.”<sup>41</sup> The rationale for combining the two types of literacies is evident from Table 1 above: the outcomes / elements of information literacy all focus on information while those of media literacy encompass media functions in democracies, media content (media texts), self-expression of individuals, and skills needed to create content under the conditions of technologization. MIL as a composite concept is useful because of its inclusiveness: it “[...] recognizes the importance of all forms of media (including community media) and of all other information providers including libraries, archives, museums, publishers, and those on the Internet. The concept draws on the convergence between telecommunication and broadcasting and among many forms of media and information providers. It must be noted that the concept is not limited to information and communication technologies but it also includes oral traditions.”<sup>42</sup>

The similarities and differences between media literacy and information literacy have been studied in-depth by Lee and So<sup>43</sup> who note that “The development of digital technology is a key factor for combining media literacy and information literacy”<sup>44</sup>. It has to be noted, though, that Lee and So’s<sup>45</sup> focus is not only on the composite concept of MIL proposed by UNESCO: they investigate the competing views regarding the two literacies. Lee and So distinguish three viewpoints among researchers: “1) Media literacy and information literacy are basically different; 2) media literacy and information literacy are not the same but do have some common overlaps; 3) media literacy is just a subset of information literacy.”<sup>46</sup> Admitting that the boundary is blurred and the concepts overlap to a certain extent and are inter-related, Lee and So<sup>47</sup> compare both concepts in two dimensions and six aspects that we graphically present in Figure 2.

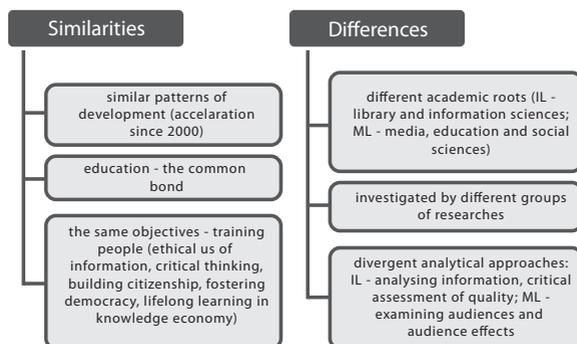


Figure 2. Media literacy and information literacy: similarities and differences.

41 UNESCO Media and Information Literacy: Policy and Strategy Guidelines, 2013, p. 191.

42 UNESCO Media and Information Literacy: Policy and Strategy Guidelines, 2013, p. 14.

43 Lee, A. Y. L., So, C. Y. K., Media Literacy and Information Literacy: Similarities and Differences.

44 Ibid., p. 138.

45 Ibid. p. 139.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid., pp. 142-143

One more approach that we see as contributing to the UNESCO rationale for combining IL and ML into a composite concept of MIL is Potter's<sup>48</sup> theory of "three building blocks of media literacy" that build an individual's "set of perspectives on the media": personal locus, knowledge structures, and skills. The conceptual model behind MIL also encompasses knowledge, skills, and attitude.<sup>49</sup> In Potter's terms, knowledge structures are "sets of organized information in a person's memory"<sup>50</sup>. The UNESCO Guidelines define knowledge as "the fact or condition of having information or of being learned."<sup>51</sup> Thus, the former definition treats knowledge as undergoing formation and being constructed and the latter one sees knowledge as an acquired state. Skills, in Potter's explication<sup>52</sup> subsume analysis, evaluation, grouping, induction, deduction, synthesis, and abstracting and are defined as "tools that people develop through practice".<sup>53</sup> UNESCO documents do not define what a skill is but skills are one of the three vital pillars on which MIL grows. Attitude is vitally important in UNESCO's conceptual model: attitude basically centres on raising awareness about the functions of media in democracies, regulation of media, understanding the necessity of media education and its integration into all levels of education (primary, secondary, and tertiary) and development of critical thinking skills. In Potter's theory, personal locus has much to do with a person's attitude towards media:

Your personal locus is composed of goals and drives. The goals shape the information-processing tasks by determining what gets filtered in and what gets ignored. [...] And the stronger your drives for information are, the more effort you will expend to attain your goals.<sup>54</sup>

To sum it up, (i) UNESCO outcomes / elements of ML and IL<sup>55</sup>, (ii) Lee and So's dimensions focusing on similarities and differences of IL and ML<sup>56</sup>, and (iii) Potter's theory of the three building blocks<sup>57</sup> in comparison to the three pillars of the UNESCO conceptual model<sup>58</sup> -- contribute to understanding why it is logical to avoid introducing new terminology and why it is enriching to use composite concepts to explain processes in contemporary society and to enable individuals to become critical thinkers in technologized world of exponentially growing information flows.

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48 Potter, W. J. *Media Literacy*, pp. 13-19.

49 UNESCO *Media and Information Literacy: Policy and Strategy Guidelines*, 2013, p. 191.

50 Potter, W. J., p. 13.

51 UNESCO *Media and Information Literacy: Policy and Strategy Guidelines*, p. 190.

52 Potter, W. J. p.15-17

53 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

55 UNESCO *Media and Information Literacy: Curriculum for Teachers*, p. 18.

56 Lee, A. Y. L., So, C. Y. K., *Media Literacy and Information Literacy: Similarities and Differences*, pp. 142-143.

57 Potter, W. J. *Media Literacy*, pp. 13-19.

58 UNESCO *Media and Information Literacy: Policy and Strategy Guidelines*, 2013, p. 39.

## Conclusions

In this paper, we have drawn much on institutional definitions of media literacy and information literacy. The reason is that we see literacy as closely related to daily social practices, political awareness, active citizenship, learning and education, knowledge construction and application in daily activities (social relations, work, and study), access to information and critical thinking. The policies and documents, visions and values developed, fostered and implemented by such entities as the UNESCO and the European institutions take into account many spheres of societal life. Literacy is very much a social practice the principles of which are imposed on us by our education which is basically acquired through formal education systems and their stakeholders. As regards education, the documents adopted by these institutions impact national policies and transform national systems of education more or less. Therefore, the conceptual frameworks of these entities have been considered along with academic research in the field of literacy.

Web 2.0 technologies have transformed the way we access and process information. Therefore, the most radical changes in the understanding of what it means to be literate in the densely-mediated world have been occurring since the onset of the 21st century. Skilfully filtering information and critically appraising its quality and meaning in any kind of messages in any type of media is vital. Thus, the convergence of information flows with the new digital media that reach huge numbers of users requires synthesizing competencies from multiple fields.

The abundance of terminological sets and approaches to literacy (in terms of types of literacy distinguished, of which information literacy and media literacy have been the widest in scope and available research) has not been easing the understanding of what it means to be literate in the intricate digital world. Synthesizing overlapping types has proved to be useful because overarching composite concepts like media and information literacy well reflect the complex nature of mediated world and encompass the needed skills, knowledge and attitude. Enabling an individual (a learner) to be a critical user of media content is vital because of media effects on knowledge construction, formation of attitudes and, consequently, our actions. The composite approach to media and information literacy safeguards from the ills of contemporary society such as radicalization and propaganda and offers guidelines as to how educate critically-thinking learners and citizens. Finally, what is very important in UNESCO's conceptual framework is that it offers a competency-based approach to literacy: convergence of concepts reflects well the multi-faceted competencies that are needed in the densely mediated and technologized world of today.

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## MEDIJINIS IR INFORMACINIS RAŠTINGUMAS: SUDĖTINIO KONCEPTO MIR FORMAVIMASIS

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**Santrauka.** Įvairių sričių mokslininkai, edukologai, švietimo strategijų kūrėjai, edukacinių technologijų specialistai pastaruoju metu intensyviai tiria, ką reiškia raštingumo sąvoka visuomenėje, kurioje medijos ir technologijos vaidina labai svarbų vaidmenį ir vis labiau skverbiasi į visas žmogaus gyvenimo sritis. Todėl savo tyrimu siekiame atsakyti į šiuos klausimus: kaip pasikeitė raštingumo sąvoka, kuri iš pradžių buvo aiškinama tik kaip gebėjimas koduoti / iškoduoti tekstus, įsigalėjus technologijoms ir medijoms? ką šiandien reiškia būti raštingu žmogumi? kodėl UNESCO skatina žvelgti į raštingumą kompleksiskai, kaip įvairialypėmis kompetencijomis pagrįstą konceptą, apjungiantį tiek gebėjimus dorotis su vis didėjančiais informacijos sraultais, tiek kritines nuostatas šiuolaikinių medijų ir technologijų ir jų galių atžvilgiu? Tyrimo metu naujais tyrimais laikomi atspirties tašku, paaikškinant, kokiais naujais komponentais jie prisideda prie mokslininkų jau atlikto darbo. Tyrime analizuojami instituciniai konceptai, ypač UNESCO plėtojama sudėtinė medijų ir informacinio raštingumo sąvoka, kadangi, mūsų manymu, būtent tokių institucijų kaip UNESCO ir Europos Komisijos patvirtinti dokumentai tiesiogiai veikia nacionalines švietimo strategijas ir programas bei ugdymo praktiką. Mūsų dienomis esminės visą gyvenimą besimokančio žmogaus kompetencijos glaudžiai susiję su sumaniu informacijos filtravimu bei kritiniu mąstymu. Informacinio raštingumo ir medijų raštingumo sąvokos glaudžiai susijusios, taip pat glaudžiai susijusios ir kompetencijos, būtinos ugdant raštingumą dabarties sąlygomis. Todėl sudėtinės sąvokos (ne vis nauji pertekliniai terminai, kurie pabrėžia tik vieng ar kitą sudėtingu fenomenu tapusio raštingumo komponentą) padeda geriau suprasti raštingumo konceptą ir suvokti, į ką būtent šiandien ypač svarbu atkreipti dėmesį tiek teoretikams, tiek ugdymo praktikams.

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** informacinis raštingumas, medijų raštingumas, medijų ir informacinis raštingumas, technologizavimas, sąvokų susiliejimas.

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