GLOBAL MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY WEEK 2023

Media and Information Literacy in Digital Spaces: A collective global agenda

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#GlobalMILWeek
Global Media and Information Literacy Week 2023
Feature Conference

23-25 October 2023 | Amman, Jordan

Venue: King Hussein Bin Talal Convention Centre

“Trust is the bedrock of every society. When it's chipped away, societies crumble. We must build trust in the face of a growing infodemic of disinformation & lies. I call on countries to develop media & information literacy policies that put science, knowledge & facts first.”

António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations

“...Today, information is ubiquitous, and can travel instantly around the world. Today, anyone can create and distribute content, expressing themselves in ways they never could before. In some cases, this has created an overflow of information – both online and offline – where it is increasingly difficult for citizens to know what to believe and who to trust, creating potentially devastating implications for democracy, sustainable development, and peace.”

Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO

❖ Background and highlights from recent years

The advent of the Internet and social media has revolutionized the ways in which we inform, educate, and organize ourselves, bringing unprecedented opportunities for expression and access to information. However, the rise of online misinformation and hate speech has shown that we must massively upscale efforts to teach people of all ages to think critically and click wisely in online spaces, and to understand the algorithms and processes that underpin them. In other words, empower people with media and information literacy.

This effort begins of course in the classroom, and UNESCO has been working with education
systems for decades along these lines. But it must not and cannot end there, especially as digital platforms continue to evolve at lightning speed, and many of those most vulnerable to disinformation and conspiracy theories have long since left formal education behind. The best way – in some cases the only way – to reach users of platforms is on the platforms themselves. They must play a more active role in teaching people to use their products safely and effectively.

Several layers of interventions are needed. UNESCO’s upcoming “Guidelines for regulating digital platforms: A multi-stakeholder approach to safeguarding freedom of expression and access to information”, which were discussed at its Global “Internet for Trust” Conference on last February 2023, and to be released in September 2023 set out actions needed to strengthen media and information literacy³, as a complementary approach to regulation with the aim of empowering users.

Ensuring Media and Information Literacy for all is critical to achieving inclusive digital spaces. Imagine the transformation that could occur if all digital platforms and media truly populate their platforms with media and information literacy learning. How can multistakeholder groups contribute to increasing media and information literacy learning in digital spaces? What should the digital platforms and media themselves do in this respect?

UNESCO and partners have taken meaningful actions to advance media and information literacy in digital spaces, including through advocacy and by mobilizing international cooperation.

Against this background, Global Media and Information Literacy Week 2023 highlights the opportunities and the significance to exponentially broaden media and information literacy learning in digital spaces.

❖ Media and Information Literacy in digital spaces

Attaining media and information literacy in digital spaces cannot be reached without multilateral and multi-stakeholder cooperation. The global community is then solicited to develop new initiatives and reinforce existing ones to advance media and information literacy in digital spaces.

Integrating media and information literacy in digital spaces has implications for various challenges and opportunities existing in the digital ecosystem. For instance, media and information literacy in digital spaces enables digital citizenship and global citizenship by empowering people to:

- Know their rights online, and to respect the rights of others such as their rights to privacy, digital rights, and other human rights such as freedom of expression and access to information;
- Be more critical about how they use information, digital technologies and media and thus become more resilient to hate content and disinformation that stir conflict and division;
- Develop more agency and autonomy to self-protect and to protect others, thus staying

safe online;

- Appreciate how transparency and accountability of digital platforms and media can facilitate openness and dialogue in digital spaces;
- Know how to access information online and what ethical steps to take when access is blocked;
- Meaningfully engage in dialogue and promoting equality and non-discrimination online - including gender equality - respecting the perspectives of others while advocating for peace and inclusive digital spaces.

In addressing these issues, government, digital platforms, private sector and industry in general, civil society, schools, libraries, academics and technical experts, youth, media must link up efforts. Global Media and Information Literacy Week 2023 is a means to mobilize all stakeholders and advance a common approach.

To facilitate a common approach, and as a central outcome of the Week, UNESCO will advance user empowerment through media and information literacy on the basis of the operationalization the “Draft Guidelines for regulating digital platforms: A multi-stakeholder approach to safeguarding freedom of expression and access to information”.

In so doing, UNESCO will make recommendations for the inclusion of media and information literacy in the United Nations’ Summit of the Future scheduled for September 2024.

❖ Outcomes

- Amman Declaration on Media and Information Literacy in the Digital Spaces: A Collective Global Agenda;
- Action plan for Digital Platforms to integrate Media and Information Literacy. This will be an operationalization of the media and information literacy component of the Guidelines for regulating digital platforms;
- Advancing MIL cities in the Arab region;
- New commitment of funding for media and information literacy for all;
- Launch of new UNESCO resources:
  i) The first radio-based MOOC Think Critically, Click Wisely: Media and Information Literacy in the Next Normal;
  ii) The International Media and Information Literacy Multimedia Platform.