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First International Forum on Media and Information Literacy 15-16-17 June, 2011

**Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University
Faculty of Arts and Humanities Sais-Fes
Fez, Kingdom of Morocco**

**Background Document
Prepared by:**

**Dr. Drissia CHOUIT and Dr. Abdelhamid NFISSI,
with the collaboration of members
of the Scientific Committee**



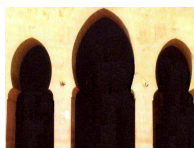
EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION
FOR VIEWERS INTERESTS



PHILIPPINES COMMUNICATION SOCIETY



Moulay Ismail University
MEKNES



Faculty of Humanities
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Asian Institute of Journalism
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Introduction

Organizers

The First International Forum on Media and Information Literacy (MIL) is organized by the Research Group on Mass Communication, Culture and Society; the Laboratory of Discourse, Creativity and Society: Perception and Implications; the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Sais-Fes; and Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fez, Morocco, on June 15-17, 2011.

Partners

The First International Forum on Media and Information Literacy (MIL) is organized with the collaboration of UNESCO as lead partner, ISESCO, and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) as key partners; the European Association for Viewers' Interests (EAVI), the Mentor International Media Education Association (MENTOR), Moulay Ismail University, Meknes, Morocco, the Philippine Communication Society (PCS) and the Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication (AIJC). [This list is not final: we are expecting more partners.]

1. Rationale for the Forum

1.1. Motivations

1.1.1. Grounds for Combining Media and Information Literacy

The First International Forum on Media and Information Literacy (MIL) examines both media and information literacy because in the digital age and convergence of communications, information literacy and media literacy should go hand in hand to achieve full human development, to build up civic societies, and to lay the foundations for world peace and intercultural constructive dialogue. This Forum is the first of its magnitude since UNESCO initiated the blending of the two concepts, media literacy and information literacy, to empower audiences to be aware of the functions of media and other information providers, and to be more critical and discriminating in their reception, evaluation and use of information and media.

To define the two concepts briefly, we can say that Information Literacy addresses all forms of information and communication, in various contexts and aspects of life. Therefore, it is a fundamental human right in the digital era because it empowers

people to be active actors in society through their informed selection, critical evaluation, responsible use and creative production of information. In fact, to face up to the challenges of knowledge economies and knowledge societies, we have to endow individuals with new skills and training commensurate with the information and communication revolution, not only in terms of "access" to information and communication technologies, but also by providing them with the "know-how": skills and competencies on how to use these technologies effectively. Therefore, it is necessary to raise awareness about the importance of Information Literacy at all levels of society –educational, social, cultural, economic and political- and to invest in ICTs in education and lifelong learning. The capacity to use ICTs has, ineluctably, become an integral part of Information Literacy.

Media Literacy, on the other hand, sharpens Information Literacy by (1) maximizing critical capacities, analytical skills and knowledge structures to access, decipher, evaluate, interpret and make informed use of various media forms; (2) providing a reflective learning on the dynamics of mass media: the nature of the media landscape, its processes and functions, which, in turn, (a) raise awareness of audiences on how the media shape the frames of reference of individuals, their value systems, attitudes and behaviours, and how they might impact on their democratic values and civic obligations and (b) make of them responsible users of various media and information contents; and (3) enabling individuals to become creative producers of information and media in various contexts, tailored to specific audiences. This shows the importance of combining both Media and Information Literacy (MIL) in our project as two fundamental vectors of democratization and active citizenship to help individuals develop critical thinking, achieve their full potential and enhance their participation in the emerging knowledge societies.

1.1.2. The Added Value of the First International Forum on Media and Information Literacy

UNESCO formalized the concept of media and information literacy (MIL) over several stages. The first, represented by the Grünwald Declaration of 1982, set the frames for media education and served to draw attention to the importance of media in education. The second, represented by the Toulouse Conference in 1990, served to systematize approaches and to define more accurately what was needed in this field. The third, represented by the Vienna Conference of 1998, set the bridge between media education and the new information and communication

technologies, taking into account the prerogatives of the new information and digital age. Finally the Alexandria Proclamation on information literacy and life-long learning of 2005 defined information literacy and life-long learning as a precondition to the Information Society and a basic human right in a digital world by empowering people in all walks of life to seek, evaluate, use and create information effectively to achieve their personal, social, occupational and educational goals. Seeing that media literacy and information literacy are closely intertwined, UNESCO decided to blend the two concepts in education curricula to cope with the challenges of inclusive-information and knowledge-based societies. A *Model UNESCO MIL Curriculum* was prepared to this effect. UNESCO intends to launch this curriculum in three languages: English, French and Arabic in the First International Forum on MIL to be held in Fez in June 2011.

Yet, most of the research, strategies and action plans undertaken so far in this field are dominated by Western perspectives which stem from Western contexts and realities. As the stage of development of media and information is concurrent with the stage of development of particular countries, it goes without saying that there is a big discrepancy between developed and developing countries in this regard. These differences are heightened by different contexts, frames of reference, cultures and visions of the world, which should be fully taken into consideration while addressing media and information literacy. This Forum aims to examine, among others, the state of the art of MIL in developing and emergent countries and to set the stage for MIL from cross-cultural perspectives. In fact, while the North has gone far ahead in media and information literacy, the South is still lagging far behind despite the extensive interaction of young people with media and ICTs in the South as it was demonstrated by the recent uprising in the Arab world. This is one of the key variables of MIL that the Forum intends to tackle. Setting this debate within an international framework gives the Forum more credence. In this regard, we highly welcome the decision of UNESCO to organize the Maghreb and Arab Regions Consultations on the MIL Curriculum during this Forum on MIL, in order to adapt it to the needs and specificities of these regions.

1.2. Diagnosis of MIL Worldwide: Interdisciplinary Cross-Cultural Approach

The last two decades have given rise to conflicting attitudes about mass media worldwide: while the media have gained an unprecedented power both at the global

and local levels, it is largely agreed that their quality and ethical standards, the watchdog function of the press, unbiased communication strategies, and public sphere have regressed markedly, under the influence of national, regional and global conglomerates, economic shifts and new political power alignments. The big loser in this game of interests is the media and information-illiterate citizens/users/consumers/producers at various ranks of society, hence the importance of MIL.

The proliferation of information and communication technologies makes information generation easier but there is also a need to organize this information into useful knowledge structures to liberate and empower media and information users/consumers. Besides, constructive debates / deliberations are of urgent need to tackle key questions concerning the vital role of information and media in society and how to enhance free and responsible media and information systems for well-informed citizens, active actors for human, social, cultural and economic development, and for a better world governed by democratic practices and application of international law on egalitarian basis.

In this spirit, the First International Forum on Media and Information Literacy (MIL) is organized to set the stage for a balanced and inclusive approach to media and information literacy. To this end, the forum adopts a holistic approach to MIL. While addressing basic concepts of definition and typology, focus will be laid on approaches to MIL from various perspectives in order to provide a comprehensive view of the issue. In fact, when we talk about MIL, we do not refer only to multiple literacies imposed by the information and digital age, but we also take into consideration elements pertaining to culture(s), society, politics, public relations, international relations, modern warfare, etc. which shape the global news, political and public agendas. This is why we invite contributions from experts and professionals in the various disciplines of human sciences of relevance to the topic of the forum: media, communication, information and communication technologies, education, curriculum development, sociology, psychology, history, geography, political sciences and international relations. We also call for the participation of media and information organizations, research groups/centres, professional associations, civil society actors, NGOs and international organizations advocating media and information literacy for all.

The main axes of the forum include information and communication technologies; access to information and media; information and media competencies; media / information and basic rights and obligations; global media and information systems and their impact on local cultures and public opinion; approaches to media and information literacy; the power of mass media and the empowering effect of MIL practices; media and information processes, functions and industries; how to differentiate between fact and opinion, and how to detect prejudice, stereotype, defamation, manipulation, misinformation, disinformation and distortion of information for specific purposes; digital literacy; visual literacy; cultural literacy; news literacy; Internet literacy; creative cultural production perspectives of media and information; media and information literacy as platform for intercultural dialogue; electronic media and cyber culture; ICTs as platform for youth social participation; social media and citizen journalism; new trends in journalism and information systems; the watchdog function of the press; media and information, commerce and audiences; media and information, politics, and ideology; global Internet governance; media and information governance, culture and ethics; responsibilities of free media and information systems; responsibilities of informed citizenry; ways and means to revive the basic role of libraries, to make informed use of the Internet, to enhance free, independent and responsible media and information systems, and to build up media and information literate societies.

2. Objectives

The First International Forum on Media and Information Literacy (MIL) aims (1) to raise awareness and understanding about the importance of MIL in the information and communication age as a prerequisite to human and economic development; (2) to draw up plans to integrate MIL in the national educational programmes in order to encourage the development of media and information literate users/audiences/producers, thereby maximizing the potentials of the media and information at the service of democracy, justice, sustainable economic models, and development at all levels of society; (3) to sensitize participants to legal, political, economic and ethical issues in information and media literacy, and to discuss scientific approaches for media and information sourcing, sharing, evaluation and utilization; (4) to examine conceptual issues regarding verbal, visual and digital literacy; (5) to reinforce the role of universities both as centres of knowledge and vectors of sustainable development; (6) to focus discussion on media and information literacy from cross-cultural perspectives, giving voice to the concerns,

preoccupations and aspirations of countries of the South and stressing the importance of cooperation not only North/South but also South/South in order to promote MIL, and (7) to come up with the Fez Declaration on MIL and Plan of Action to this effect.

3. Scope

Proposed papers would be welcomed, but not exclusive to topics, as the following:

- Media Literacy / Information Literacy: Theory and Practice/ Policies and Strategies
- Media and Information Literacy Integration in Formal and Non-Formal Education
- Media and Information Sourcing, Sharing, and Evaluation
- Building Knowledge Structures on MIL
- Blending Media Literacy and Information Literacy: A Unifying Notion
- Measuring MIL
- MIL and Governance: A New Civic Education
- Empowering the Media and Information Consumers, Knowing their Rights and Responsibilities
- Creative Cultural Production Perspectives of Media and Information
- Youth-produced Media and Information
- Internet Addiction Disorders and Antidotes
- Freedom of Expression / Freedom of Information: Cross-Cultural Perspectives
- News Media / News Values: Interdisciplinary Approach
- Digital Literacy / Visual Literacy: Theory and Practice/ Digital and Information Divide
- MIL as Platform for Intercultural Dialogue
- Media and Information Ethics : Comparative Approach
- Media and Information Diversity: Comparative Interdisciplinary Approach
- Media/Information and the Construction of Public Opinion
- Media and Public Relations: Who Shapes What?

- Media and International Relations / Media and Modern Warfare: Blurred Interactions: Interdisciplinary Cross-Cultural Approach
- Media/Information and Public Policy / Media and the Political Sphere: Interdisciplinary Approach
- New Trends in Journalism / Critical Media: Comparative Historical Perspectives
- Social Media and Citizen Journalism
- ICTs as Platform for Youth Social Participation

4. Target Groups

The Forum brings together knowledge workers drawn from all areas of life including academics, information professionals, librarians, media practitioners, policy makers, civil society actors, experts from international organizations, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations and other stakeholders in the area of information and media literacy.

5. Expected Outcomes

The Forum is expected to increase awareness and understanding of stakeholders on critical issues on media and information literacy. Researchers will improve their knowledge and skills in all areas of MIL; practitioners will become more sensitive to ethical and legal aspects of media messages and information design and dissemination; policy makers and regulatory agencies will be better equipped to putting appropriate policies and frameworks for enhancing media and information literacy; and educators will be better equipped with enhanced knowledge on media and information literacy to facilitate the empowerment, self esteem, creativity, and civic participation of individuals of all ages and gender. The importance of the cultural component in MIL will be highlighted, as well as the needs and specificities of developing and emergent countries. The Forum is expected to come out with the Fez Declaration on MIL and a Plan of Action to promote MIL and encourage international, regional and inter-regional cooperation to this effect. The Forum will provide basis for continual interactions on media and information literacy across borders, cultures, fields of study and professional practice through its bi-annual meetings. In this regard, we are pleased that this first edition of the Forum will provide a platform for launching the *UNESCO/UNAOC MIL and Intercultural Dialogue University Network*.

6. Organizing Committee:

- **Brahim AKDIM**, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Sais-Fes, Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fez, Morocco.
- **Abdelhamid NFISSI, Forum Chair**, Director of the Research Group on Mass Communication, Culture and Society; Professor of Comparative Linguistics and Media Studies, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Sais-Fes, Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fez, Morocco.
- **Drissia CHOUIT, Coordinator of the Forum**, Adviser to the Research Group on Mass Communication, Culture and Society; Professor of Comparative Linguistics and Media Studies, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Moulay Ismail University, Meknes, Morocco.
- **Elhoucine OUAZZANI IBRAHIMI**, Director of the Laboratory of Discourse, Creativity and Society: Perception and Implications; Professor of Comparative Literature, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Sais-Fes, Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fez, Morocco.
- **Alton GRIZZLE**, Programme Specialist, Communication Development Division, Communication and Information Sector, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, France.
- **Jordi TORRENT**, Project Manager - Media Literacy Education, United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, New York, United States.
- **George AWAD**, Programme Officer, Communication and Information Sector, UNESCO Regional Office in Beirut, Lebanon.
- **Misako ITO**, Adviser for Communication and Information in the Maghreb, UNESCO Regional Office in Rabat, Morocco.
- **Youssef BENABDERRAZIK**, Professor of Linguistics; Coordinator of the Research Group on Applied Media Studies and Linguistics, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Sais-Fes, Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fez, Morocco.
- **Mohammed FAOUBAR**, Professor of Sociology, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Sais-Fes, Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fez, Morocco.
- **Ahmed BACHENOU**, Professor of French Literature, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Sais-Fes, Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fez, Morocco.

- **Mohamed Chokri IRAQUI**, Professor of Arabic Linguistics, Coordinator of the Research Group on Language and Discourse in Arabic, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Sais-Fes, Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fez, Morocco.
- **Jawad RAMI**, Program Director, Radio MFM Sais, Fez, Morocco.

7. Scientific Committee for the First Edition of the Forum:

- **Brahim AKDIM, Ph.D.** Professor of Geography, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Sais-Fes, Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fez, Morocco.
- **Elhoucine OUAZZANI IBRAHIMI, Ph.D.** Vice-Dean for Scientific Research and Cooperation; Director of the Laboratory of Discourse, Creativity and Society: Perception and Implications; Coordinator of the Master Programme on Specialized Translation; Professor of Comparative Literature, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Fes-Sais, Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fez, Morocco.
- **Abdelhamid NFISSI, Ph.D.** Chairman of the Department of English; Founder and Director of the Research Group on Mass Communication, Culture and Society; Member of the Forum UNESCO-University and Heritage (FUUH); Professor of Comparative Linguistics and Media Studies, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Fes-Sais, Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fez, Morocco.
- **Drissia CHOUIT, Ph.D.** Former Consultant to UNESCO; Member of the Forum UNESCO-University and Heritage (FUUH); Adviser to the Research Group on Mass Communication, Culture and Society; Member of the Laboratory of Discourse, Creativity and Society; Professor of Comparative Linguistics and Media Studies, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Moulay Ismail University, Meknes, Morocco.
- **José Reuben Q. ALAGARAN II, Ph.D.** President of Philippine Communication Society; Chairperson of Advocacy and Social Mobilization Program of the Manila-based Southeast Asian Centre for Lifelong Learning for Sustainable Development under the auspices of UNESCO; Invited as expert on MIL to participate in the UNESCO Expert Group Consultation on the MIL Curriculum for Teachers; Professor of Communication and Media

Studies, Department of Communication, Miriam College, Quezon City, Philippines.

- **Rotimi Williams OLATUNJI, Ph.D.** Member, African Council for Communication Education; Fellow, Academy of Marketing Science; Editor of the *African Journal of Marketing Communication*, Editorial Member, *International Journal of Social and Management Sciences*; Associate Editor of the *Nigeria Journal of Communication*; Professor of Advertising as Communication and Consumer Psychology; and Head, Department of Public Relations and Advertising, School of Communication, Lagos State University, Nigeria.
- **Dobrinka PEICHEVA, Ph.D.** Member of the Bulgarian Association of Sociology and member of IAMCR (International Association for Media and Communication Research); Professor of Sociology of Mass Communication and Culture, Department of Sociology, South-West University, Bulgaria.
- **Bheemaiah Krishnan RAVI, Ph.D.** Editor-in-Chief, *Indian Journal of Media Studies*; former Member of Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes, Govt. of Karnataka; Vice-Chairman, Public Relations Council of India, Bangalore; Professor of Electronic Media, Film Studies, Political and International Communication, Department of Studies in Communication, Bangalore University, India.

8. Contact Information

For further details/enquiries, please contact:

- Dr. Abdelhamid NFISSI, Forum Chair
- Dr. Drissia CHOUIT, Coordinator of the Forum

nfissichouit@gmail.com