BUILDING A NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY

Stéphane Goldstein
Dr Jane Secker

European Conference on Information Literacy (ECIL)
Kraków, Poland
October 2023
INTRODUCTIONS

Stéphane Goldstein
Executive Director, InformAll
Coordinator, Media and Information Literacy Alliance

Dr Jane Secker
Chair of CILIP Information Literacy Group
Senior Lecturer in Educational Development, City, University of London
PURPOSE OF THIS WORKSHOP

To discuss the dynamics of how to build a national or regional MIL initiative, drawing from the recent experiences in the UK with the Media and Information Literacy Alliance (MILA). We will:

- **Compare** our approach with similar or related initiatives in other countries.
- **Address** lessons learnt from the UK and from participants’ own countries.
- **Discuss** with participants the ways of building awareness of MIL across society.
- **Point to** ideas about how best to generate interest in MIL among diverse stakeholders.
- **Consider** how to contribute to the elaboration of public policy and practice, including educational practice, with possible reference to UNESCO’s 2013 MIL Policy and Strategy Guidelines.
NATIONAL CONTEXT

- Media and information literacy is increasingly recognised as a public policy issue, driven by concerns about online harms.
- The Online Media Literacy Strategy (2021) is the national framework for developing both media literacy and information literacy.
- The UK Government (DCMS/DSIT) and Ofcom are funding a number of pilot projects over 2023-2024 to develop media literacy among particular audiences.
- The Online Media Literacy Strategy has identified 170 media literacy initiatives across the UK, mostly run by third sector organisations.
- The Online Safety Bill (soon to become law) addresses media literacy and places obligations on Ofcom, the UK media regulator, to promote it.
BACKGROUND

- MILA is an independent initiative set up in October 2021, following the publication of the Online Media Literacy Strategy.
- One of the challenges identified in the Strategy is the lack of cross-sector coordination and collaboration between the wide range of stakeholders in the UK.
- MILA seeks to address this through dialogue and partnerships, with the aim of:
  - Developing the evidence base by fostering and contributing to research collaborations.
  - Encouraging the development of communities of practice from different sectors.
  - Promoting and advocating for MIL, especially to influence public policy.
MILA’S APPROACH

- So far, MILA has functioned as an informal, loose alliance of organisations and individuals. But...
  - it has very limited funding
  - it relies entirely on goodwill and volunteer input.
- Much of its focus has been on building links with a range of players covering education, libraries, academia, public and regulatory bodies, journalism, policy-making, advocacy groups, etc.
  - 260 individuals and organisations on our mailing list at present.
- It has funded one research project – a review of evidence on IL and society (to be published late October) – and provided expert input to a couple of others.
- It has developed a draft framework to demonstrate what MIL means for people in everyday life and in various recognisable settings.
- MILA is slowly establishing its credibility as an initiative that can provide expertise in the field of MIL – but to date, this has been on a small scale.
- Outreach is essentially through the website and quarterly newsletters.
NEXT STEPS

- If MILA is to develop its credibility, effectiveness and profile, it needs to become a formal organisation with a legal personality.
- During summer 2023, it has taken the first steps to establish itself as a registered charity
  - This is a bureaucratic process that takes several months.
  - MILA hopes to be formally registered around February/March 2024.
- Once this happens, MILA will be in a better position to:
  - operate in a more business-like way;
  - raise finances and run budgets;
  - play a more concrete role in initiating/running projects.
AND NOW, ON TO THE WORKSHOP...
WARM-UP ACTIVITY

In small groups, we would like you to create a drawing or logo to communicate the importance of MIL for stakeholders outside the academic or higher education worlds.

A major challenge for any advocacy initiative is to convey simply and persuasively the idea of MIL and its relevance to society. A visualisation can help with this!
In a world café format, please now consider five broad questions, to set out an outline strategy for a national MIL initiative (alternately, a regional initiative in countries where regions have a lot of autonomy).

- You can draw comparatively from the experiences and practices in your respective countries, the lessons learnt, as well as from what we have described about the UK and MILA.
- Please address the questions in the context of the purpose of the workshop outlined earlier.

The questions overlap to an extent, but that’s inevitable.
(1) PERSUASION

What are the approaches to persuading stakeholders (public, commercial and third-sector) of the relevance and importance of MIL?

Examples of questions to consider:

- Who are the relevant stakeholders, and in what sectors?
- What is the best way of approaching them and capturing their interest?
- Are there any intermediaries/influencers that can be used to open lines of communication with stakeholders?
- How can a dialogue with stakeholders be sustained in the longer term?
- To what extent are stakeholders open to persuasion, and what are the prospects of influencing their policies?
- How can stakeholders be encouraged to work together?
- What is the role of government (national or regional) and public agencies?
What are the most effective mechanisms and strategies for developing a MIL network or alliance?

Examples of questions to consider:

- Which organisations, initiatives and individuals might be invited to form a network or alliance?
- What form might this network/alliance take?
- Is there a role for government in fostering or funding the network/alliance?
- Should the network/alliance be a public agency, or should it be independent?
- How can the network/alliance be sustained and its members kept engaged (and even enthusiastic)?
(3) CONCRETE ACTIVITIES

What are the concrete activities that a national or regional MIL initiative might best undertake?

Examples of questions to consider:

- What role might the initiative play to help develop the evidence base; and how could it facilitate research?
- What might be the outputs from forming communities of practice for given themes or areas of interest?
- Could the initiative have a training and/or educational role?
- What might advocacy and influencing look like in practice (NB. linked to the first broad set of questions on persuasion)?
- How might the initiative formulate a strategy and/or business plan to help frame its programme of activities?
In a context where MIL is often seen as protectionist against online harms, how can stakeholders and society also be made aware of the empowering potential of MIL?

Examples of questions to consider:

- How can a MIL initiative ‘fit’ with the fostering of civic engagement and democracy?
- Should the initiative have a clear political role?
- What might a MIL initiative do to help shift the perception of MIL as essentially protectionist?
- How can the relationship between MIL and empowerment be best explained to different audiences?
(5) RESOURCING

How might a national or regional MIL initiative be resourced (money and people) in contexts where funding may not be readily available?

Examples of questions to consider:

- What are the most likely sources of funding for a MIL initiative, national and international?
- Aside from calls for proposals and focused funding schemes, which organisations might offer a regular and ongoing source of income?
- How can funding opportunities be monitored effectively?
- Is there a role for sponsors (i.e. organisations that would provide financial support in return for being promoted)?
- How might a MIL initiative be administered/managed, and by who?
- Who would work for a MIL initiative: staff, volunteers, interns, individuals on secondment from other organisations, any other?
SYNTHESIS OF DISCUSSIONS

We would like to pull together the main points emerging from the group discussions to draw up a framework of ideas for setting up and/or developing a national or regional MIL initiative.

Some of the ideas will be drawn from the experiences from different parts of the world; others might be more aspirational.

We would welcome the opportunity of continuing the dialogue with workshop participants beyond the conference, so that we might refine the framework and consider how we might put it to good use as a source of suggestions.
REFERENCES

DCMS/DSIT Media Literacy Programme Fund - https://www.gov.uk/guidance/media-literacy-programme-fund


UK Parliament (2023), Online Safety Bill - https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3137

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

Stéphane Goldstein
sg@informall.org.uk

Dr Jane Secker
jane.secker@city.ac.uk

www.mila.org.uk