

Report on the first European Conference on Information Literacy (ECIL)

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Published in:
Journal of Information Literacy

DOI:
[10.11645/7.2.1869](https://doi.org/10.11645/7.2.1869)

Publication date:
2013

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in ResearchOnline](#)

Citation for published version (Harvard):

Bell, M & Kelt, M 2013, 'Report on the first European Conference on Information Literacy (ECIL)', *Journal of Information Literacy*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 168-170. <https://doi.org/10.11645/7.2.1869>

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Journal of Information Literacy

ISSN 1750-5968

Volume 7 Issue 2

December 2013

Conference Corner

Bell, M. and Kelt, M. 2013. Report from the first European Conference on Information Literacy (ECIL). *Journal of Information Literacy*, 7(2), pp.168-170.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.11645/7.2.1869>

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Chan, L. et al 2002. *Budapest Open Access Initiative*. New York: Open Society Institute. Available at: <http://www.soros.org/openaccess/read.shtml> [Retrieved 22 January 2007].

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The first European Conference on Information Literacy (ECIL 2013) took place in Istanbul from 22-25 October 2013. This initiative was co-organised by the department of information management of Hacettepe University, Turkey and the department of information and communication sciences of Zagreb University, Croatia and the 367 delegates from 59 countries were fortunate to be part of such a well-organised and interesting event. The programme was packed: workshops; pecha kucha; discussion panels; poster presentations; and research and best practice seminars ran from early morning into the evening.

Delegates were very lucky to hear from three inspiring keynote speakers. A real highlight was the chance to hear Paul Zurkowski's keynote address: *Towards universal information literacy: the economic and social building blocks*. He has an engaging presentation style, and gave an overview of the growth and development of information literacy (IL) since the 1970s. He related IL skills to the idea of empowering the general population and making it harder for those in authority to fool people. The concept of IL as a revolutionary tool struck a chord, as well as his assertion that information could be dangerous, so if IL is not challenging, we are doing it wrong.



From left: Maria Bell, Andrew Walsh, Nancy Graham and Marion Kelt.

Dr Indrajit Banerjee, Director of the Information Society Division of UNESCO opened the conference, and was followed by Maria-Carme Torras Calvo and Evegny Kuzmin presenting an overview of how high-level organisations such as UNESCO and IFLA are collaborating on the IL agenda. This was vital as it is easy to lose sight of the wider perspective when occupied with the day-to-day grind in our own jobs.



Marion Kelt, Nancy Graham, Jane Secker and Andrew Walsh at ECIL 2013

Christine Bruce gave another excellent keynote address; *Information literacy research and practice: an experiential perspective* described experiential research as a method for making IL more visible.

The work of UK initiatives such as CoPILOT and RIDLS (see Resources) were included in the programme as panel discussions and several librarians from UK higher education (HE) also shared their practice in the *Best Practices 7: IL - Higher Education* strand. These sessions were incredibly useful for understanding the breadth of IL work being carried out across the world. They allowed practitioners to share their experience, gain inspiration and knowledge from each other and make connections to better face the challenges at their respective institutions.

There was a useful and enlightening workshop presented by Stephanie Havelka: *From information literacy to mobile information literacy: supporting students' research and information needs in a mobile world*, which looked at the idea of evaluating mobile apps. She pointed out that we should be evaluating them critically, and teaching our students to do this, as they are used in our research.

Anne Zald, Jennifer Fabbi and Steven Hoover ran a useful workshop on curriculum-mapping to integrate and communicate IL training to faculty and senior managers. This is a truly scary subject and they tackled it bravely and gave us some practical advice on how to implement mapping in our own institutions.

Annemaree Lloyd was another outstanding speaker presenting *Building information resilient workers: the critical ground of workplace information literacy. What have we learnt?* It was great to think about the ongoing needs of people in the workplace. It can be easy to feel that the job is done when a student graduates, but there is a wider world of IL out there to consider.

There are too many excellent papers to describe here: however Sheila Webber of the University of Sheffield has provided an excellent round up of many ECIL 2013 papers in her *Information Literacy* blog which will provide readers with an insight into the extensive range of topics covered by the conference (Webber 2013).

Ralph Catts closed the conference with a roundup: *Whither goes information literacy – a rapporteur report*. In an amazing piece of work, Ralph pulled together all of the strands of the conference into one engaging and challenging presentation. Ralph challenged IL practitioners and researchers to ensure that our work is substantiated with robust evidence. Ralph also raised the question of whether we should be using the term Media and Information Literacy instead of IL, provoking questions and concerns amongst delegates. Andrew Walsh of the University of Huddersfield discussed this question on his blog immediately after the conference and provides an excellent summary (Walsh 2013).



From left: Maria Bell and Nancy Graham at the Aya Sofia, Istanbul

Istanbul proved to be a fabulous conference destination and many of us had allowed a little extra time to take in the sights and sounds of Istanbul. The Harbiye Military Museum Congress Centre was a good venue and, as all conferences march on their stomachs, we should mention the excellent quality and frequency of the refreshments provided. The social programme was well thought-out, with an evening reception in the museum garden, while the gala dinner was a

wonderful night cruise on the Bosphorous. The free fleecy blanket was also very welcome as it is a bit bracing in the evening. We dined, we danced and we enjoyed the magnificent sights as we sailed towards the Black Sea. The only downside to the festivities fell on those of us who were presenting at 8.30 the next morning.

This conference was a truly international meeting providing an opportunity to meet and debate IL issues with colleagues worldwide and to take time to reflect on the wider perspective in IL's role in society as a transformational literacy. The good news is that a second conference is already being planned and will be run in an equally fantastic location - Dubrovnik, Croatia - in October 2014.

Resources

European Conference on Information Literacy (ECIL 2013):
<http://www.ecil2013.org>

Community of practice for information literacy online teaching (CoPILOT):
<http://delilaopen.wordpress.com/project-co-pilot/>

Research information and digital literacies coalition (RIDLS):
<http://www.researchinfonet.org/infolit/ridls/>

References

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Walsh, Andrew. 2013. MIL vs IL at the European Conference on Information Literacy. *Making Games for Libraries blog*. [Online] 26 October 2013. Available at: <http://gamesforlibraries.blogspot.co.uk/2013/10/mil-vs-il-at-european-conference-on.html> [Accessed 14 November 2013]