



## **ECIL 2021. The Seventh European Conference on Information Literacy**

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# ECIL 2021: The seventh European conference on information literacy

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After a pause due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the [Seventh European Conference on Information Literacy \(ECIL\) 2021](#) took place online from September 20 to 23. The Department of Information Management of Hacettepe University, the Department of Information and Communication Sciences of the University of Zagreb, and the Information Literacy Association organised the event. The conference's main theme was 'Information Literacy in a Post-Truth Era', and its contributions amounted to three keynote speeches, one invited talk, 84 papers and two doctoral forum contributions, 24 best practices contributions, six workshops, 12 posters, 7 PechaKucha presentations and two panels.

The ECIL conference series started in 2013 under the patronage of UNESCO and since then has maintained a tradition of attracting prominent figures in the information literacy (IL) community among its presenters. This year these contributors included keynote speakers Olof Sundin (Lund University), Markus Behmer (University of Bamberg) in dialogue with Till Krause (Süddeutsche Zeitung Magazine), Stephan Lewandowsky (University of Bristol), and the invited speaker Alexandra Becker (Media University in Stuttgart).

In his keynote speech, which drew upon his most recent books (Haider & Sundin, 2019, 2022), Olof Sundin connected the ongoing 'crisis of information' to the blurred boundaries between the roles of consumer and citizen in the information society. On the topic of citizenship, later in the conference, Stéphane Goldstein (InformAll) and Jane Secker (City, University of London) highlighted the historical development of IL policies in the UK in a compelling talk. The second keynote speaker, Stephan Lewandowsky, a co-author of *The Debunking Handbook 2020* (Lewandowsky et al., 2020), offered a convincing investigation of the issue of 'post-truth' through the lens of the cognitive sciences. Lewandowsky drew a 'brief history of lies' from Richard Nixon's Watergate to Donald Trump's 'alternative facts' and presented his experimental research on 'information literacy inoculation', i.e., the exposure of experimental subjects to short videos where common strategies of disinformation are debunked. In a subsequent conference session, İpek Şencan (Hacettepe University) deeply problematised the concept of 'news', which is, in my view, a necessary precondition for understanding the fakeness of 'fake news'. The last keynote session, with Markus Behmer and Till Krause, concerned the 'overnewsed but underinformed' citizens of the information society and followed the path paved by Sundin and Lewandowsky. The invited talk by Alexandra Becker presented the findings of the research project *Lernwelt Hochschule 2030* and was focused on the student's perspective on the development of teaching and learning environments. While not explicitly dedicated to libraries, I found her discussion of the current state of educational architecture of great interest for the library community, especially regarding the pandemic-related increase in *hybrid* teaching (and, more broadly, working), which sees people functioning simultaneously in digital and in-person spaces.

If I turn my memory to previous editions of the conference, I find historical continuity: sustainability (the central theme at *ECIL 2016*) was discussed by Paula Ochôa and Leonor Gaspar Pinto (Universidade NOVA de Lisboa). Workplace IL (the topic of *ECIL 2017*) was discussed by Krista Lepik (University of Tartu and Lund University). Regarding IL in everyday life, the theme of *ECIL 2018*, Sheila Webber (University of Sheffield) and Bill Johnston (University of Strathclyde) presented their research on ageism, according to which older people



for undergraduates according to a user experience (UX) workflow. Essi Prykäri and Riikka Sinisalo (LUT University) presented their UX work with a widespread tool for IL instruction, [LibGuides](#).

The poster by Minna Suikka (University of Helsinki) about a university course on meme literacy drew attention to a source of information (or mis-/disinformation) whose “viral” load at a time of information epidemics should never be underestimated.

In sum, ECIL has confirmed its role as a major venue for anyone interested in IL. The conference's organisers should also be praised for choosing a timely topic for this year's conference. In addition, in my experience the peer-review process was excellently managed, while the digital format did not affect the friendly and constructive tone typical of the event (as shown also by the great number of smiles in the [pictures](#) available from the conference's website). Most of the sessions were held in parallel, so I was unable attend all of the many interesting events on the programme. Luckily, the book of proceedings—to be published in 2022 by Springer and edited by Serap Kurbanoğlu (Hacettepe University)—will allow for a more comprehensive picture of the contributions than this short conference report.

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