Call for applications

Context

Digital technology pervades every aspect of our lives and leads us to receive, relay, ratify and produce media and information every day. As a result, the term “literacy” has been increasingly used to point to practices or competences that exceed the mastery of the written text (in reading and writing) and include the use of all symbols systems to participate in society in critical, creative, and reflexive ways.

Over the last decades, a multitude of labels have appeared to designate new forms of literacy, which are now the subject of an abundant body of research from a variety of disciplines. Among these, media literacy, information literacy, and more recently digital literacy have gradually emerged as major fields of inquiry, each corresponding to a research tradition with its own objects of study, conceptual apparatuses, methods, and arenas for dissemination and societal valorization.

The development of these traditions can be interpreted as a sign of scientific vitality. However, it does not come without a number of pitfalls. The proliferation of “literacy” concepts has been accompanied by a lack of shared conceptual definitions, and a multiplicity of disciplinary postures that are most often left implicit in publications and communications, leading to potential confusion.

Inasmuch as one might wish to see media, information and digital literacy research converge, or at least develop in mutual awareness of one another, such a convergence between these traditions calls for interdisciplinary dialogue and a systematic discussion of their concepts, theories, methods and disciplinary backgrounds.
The ReDMIL doctoral summer school sets out to advance the interdisciplinary scientific dialogue between these traditions, by putting PhD students from these three areas to work together, with their more experienced peers.

**Litertacies to revamp, repair, rekindle our world**

Following the 2018 edition entitled “Defining digital/media/information literacy as culture, practices, or competences”, the theme for this year’s edition of ReDMIL is: “**Litertacies to revamp, repair, rekindle our world**”.

New (media, information, digital) literacies¹ have long been described as potential positive forces able to empower individuals and contribute to the development of societies. We may think about literacies as means to foster critical thinking, encourage active citizenship and social participation, reduce socioeconomic inequalities, stimulate creative expression, or facilitate lifelong learning, for example. Yet new literacies are all too often thought of only as means to counter a variety of ills (fake news, conspiracy theories, radicalization, cyber-bullying, information overload, online sexual predation, media violence, passivity of screen users...), occulting their broader societal outcomes.

Between the pursuit of society’s grand ideals and the narrow response to the symptoms of its dysfunctions, it seems necessary to think about new literacies, and new literacies research, in a third way. As we contemplate the bruises with which our postmodern (post-truth, post-pandemic, post-colonial, anthropocenic) society lives, we want to ask: instead of seeking to fight, counter, or eradicate, how can new literacies contribute to revamp, repair or rekindle the world we live in? How can media, information or digital literacy help (re)weaving threads in the social fabric? How can they be used by individuals to further shared goals, foster mutual understanding, intercultural dialogue, or collective knowledge building?

These questions seem all the more relevant in times when political and economic forces increasingly seek to redefine the meaning and the normative scope of new literacies to align them with objectives of deregulation, competitiveness and workforce training. In such a context, it only becomes more relevant to reappropriate what new literacies mean and what they serve. As new literacies can be supported by an array of political agendas, and be aligned with a variety of economic, social, strategic, and environmental stakes (digital inclusion, (de)growth, employability, societal resilience, intercultural dialogue, sustainability, individual and collective empowerment...), what kind of common good and common ground do (and should) new literacies contribute to? Specifically, how are visions for the societal role of new literacies articulated with notions of care, benevolence, and responsibility towards society?

**The axiologies of digital, media and information literacy research**

Due to their prospective and evaluative nature, these questions may seem not to be of concern for researchers, but rather for teachers, educators or policy makers, and other field actors supporting the development of new literacies. We believe, however, that they have important implications for research as well.

To start answering these questions as researchers, we need to interrogate our own goals, theoretical apparatus, practices... to assess their relationship to the values and principles we, as citizens, would like to see flourish in the social space. This involves a critical appraisal of our own axiological positions,

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¹ In this text, we use the phrase “new literacies” for convenience, to refer to media literacy, information literacy, and digital literacy as the most visible concepts describing the variety of new forms of literacy that coexist in contemporary society.
be they implicit or explicit. This could also lead to challenge some core concepts (e.g., knowledge, skills, competencies) frequently used in the field of new literacies to understand their ethical and normative implications.

We start from the premise that research in new literacies cannot avoid being a form of engaged science. It is a social practice which, like all social practices, contributes to the 'performance' of society. The ties between research in new literacies and society go both ways. On the one hand, the social relevance of such research depends on the understanding it has of the “state of the field”, for example the media and technology landscape, the educational initiatives supporting the development of literacies, and the public policies that shape them. On the other hand, research may also influence media and technology development, educational programs (whether in or beyond the formal education systems) and public policies. This praxeological dimension of new literacies goes hand in hand with a political dimension as literacies can be considered as a factor of cultural or economical inclusion and as a facilitator of democratic participation.

These effects of new literacy research should encourage us to carefully question its influence on the practices of social actors, on institutional policies and on the social world in general. This reflection involves to carefully think about the ethical choices and axiological assumptions underlying any research project to highlight how they impact the whole research process, from the choice of a research object (what do we decide to look at?) to the dissemination of findings and interpretations towards a variety of academic and societal actors (what do we make visible, and to whom?).

This summer school aims to offer young researchers a space to reflect on these issues to become aware of axiological questions raised by their research to then make them explicit in the social space so that they can be discussed and debated.

**Scope and goal of ReDMIL 2022 Literacy Doctoral Summer School**

In this context, the ReDMIL 2022 doctoral summer school aims at contributing to the convergence between digital, media and information literacy research by bringing together researchers from all three communities, to foster the scientific debate and explore connections between them.

The summer school is an international training program that will alternate between framing presentations by senior researchers and the in-depth discussion of emerging research by participating PhD students.

Six keynotes speakers have confirmed their participation to the 2022 edition:

- Donna E. Alvermann (University of Georgia, USA)
- Pierre Fastrez (ULouvain, Belgium)
- Jerry Jacques (UCLouvain, Belgium)
- Anne Lehmans (Université de Bordeaux, France)
- Shin Mizukoshi (University of Osaka, Japan)
- Manisha Pathak-Shelat (MICA, India)

The summer school is organized on September 6th-9th, 2022 by the Groupe de Recherche en Médiation des Savoirs (Knowledge Mediation Research Group) at the Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium, in partnership with the Canada Research Chair in Media Education and Human Rights (Université TELUQ).
The goal of this summer school is to allow PhD students engaged in the field of digital literacy, media literacy or information literacy:

- to benefit from the expertise of renowned researchers in their field, through theoretical and methodological presentations;
- to present their own research to an audience composed of these experts, as well as other PhD students and researchers;
- to work collectively to the enhancement of their research work with other participants;
- to improve their knowledge of the research undertaken by their peers.

The Summer School will start with a poster session (Sept. 6th), followed by six half-day workshops (Sept. 7th-9th) on the following topics:

- theoretical frameworks in the study of digital, media and information literacies;
- epistemological issues in new literacies research;
- methods for observing, documenting, and assessing literacies and their associated educational practices and policies;
- designing research with social relevance and valorizing research results in society.

Each half-day workshop will open with one plenary talk by renowned experts, followed by a session focused on the research work of the participating PhD students, exploring them from the perspectives developed in the plenary talks. In addition to presenting an outline of their work at the opening poster session, each participating PhD student will have the opportunity to present their work in two sessions, on two different topics. In relation to the theme of the 2022' edition "Literacies to revamp, repair, rekindle our world", participants will be invited to question the axiological positions that underly their research.

The Summer School will also allow for numerous informal interactions (including a networking dinner) between experts, researchers and PhD students.

Participation and presentation from PhD students at the ReDMIL Summer School will be rewarded by 5 ECTS (or equivalent) for their doctoral training.

More information on [www.redmil.info](http://www.redmil.info)

**Submission of applications**

The summer school is targeted at PhD students who develop their research in the following areas:

- the study of new literacies: observing, documenting and/or assessing new literacies;
- the study of educational initiatives in media literacy, information literacy or digital literacy practiced by a variety of actors (teachers and educators, employers, associations, parents, media and tech companies, ...);
- the study of public policies in the fields of digital, media and information literacies at any geographical level;
- or any other topic related to digital literacy, media literacy, or information literacy.

PhD students wishing to present and discuss their doctoral research at the summer school are invited to submit an application, including the following:

- A brief curriculum vitae (one to two pages);
• A presentation of their doctoral research in a maximum of 1500 words (references not included), including the following four sections:
  o Problem or societal issue that their thesis intends to answer;
  o Research question, hypotheses (in the case of a hypothetico-deductive approach) and theoretical framework of their thesis;
  o Data collection and analysis method;
  o Expected results: the usefulness of their research, from an academic and/or societal point of view (e.g. for the world of education, for the political world, for the media industry).

• An abstract of this presentation in a maximum of 300 words.

Applications must be sent in the form of a single file (word or pdf) including CV and presentation to this address info-redmil@uclouvain.be by June 1st, 2022 at the latest.

Candidates will be personally notified of the acceptance of their participation on June 22nd, 2022.

Registration

Students whose application has been accepted and researchers (whether doctoral or not) wishing to attend the summer school without presenting their work will have to pay a participation fee of 100€ to partially cover the organizing costs of the events.

The participation fee includes lunches, coffee breaks, and the mid-summer school dinner.

Participants will have to cover their own travel and accommodation costs.

For the participants affiliated with institutions based in the European Union, this summer school should fall within the conditions to obtain an ERASMUS+ travel funding. Participants are invited to get in touch with the ERAMUS+ coordinator of their home institution.

Doctoral students for whom these costs would be an obstacle to participation can contact the organization team directly to try to find a solution.

in partnership with

UCLouvain

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Media Education and Human Rights