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Perspectives on the Current Status and Development of Global Information Literacy Education from the European Conference on Information Literacy: Postprint

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] This paper reviews the five European Conferences on Information Literacy (ECIL) to provide domestic peers with reference and insights for understanding the current status and future development trends of global information literacy education research. [Method/Process] Through personal experience attending ECIL combined with analysis of conference materials and related papers from previous sessions, the conference is summarized from five aspects: conference overview, distribution of participating countries, conference themes and research hotspots, forms of conference exchange, and Chinese scholars' participation, thereby exploring the latest progress and development directions of global information literacy education. [Results/Conclusion] The ECIL platform reflects to a certain extent the development trends of global information literacy education, namely focusing on the practical application of information literacy education, expanding research fields of information literacy education, extending related concepts of information literacy, enriching service objects of information literacy education, and innovating teaching methods and means of information literacy education. Chinese scholars have demonstrated the latest achievements of Chinese universities and research institutes in the field of information literacy education through their participation in ECIL. Finally, it is recommended that China's information literacy education community learn from ECIL's advanced experience in both content and form.

Full Text

Preamble

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Current Status and Development of Global Information Literacy Education: Perspectives from the European Conference on Information Literacy

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] This paper reviews five sessions of the European Conference on Information Literacy (ECIL) to provide domestic scholars with references for understanding the current state and future development trends of global information literacy education research. **[Method/Process]** Based on personal attendance at ECIL and analysis of conference materials and related papers from previous sessions, this study summarizes the conference from five aspects: general overview, geographic distribution of participants, conference themes and research hotspots, forms of academic exchange, and Chinese scholars' participation, thereby exploring the latest progress and development directions of global information literacy education. **[Result/Conclusion]** The ECIL platform reflects global trends in information literacy education to a certain extent, including: focusing on practical applications of information literacy education, expanding research fields, extending related concepts, enriching target audiences, and innovating teaching methods and approaches. Chinese scholars have demonstrated the latest achievements of Chinese universities and research institutions in information literacy education through their participation in ECIL. Finally, it is recommended that China's information literacy education community draw upon ECIL's advanced experiences in both content and format.

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Introduction

The European Conference on Information Literacy (ECIL) is an international academic conference initiated in 2013 by the Department of Information Management at Hacettepe University in Turkey and the Department of Information and Communication Sciences at the University of Zagreb in Croatia. Its purpose is to bring together experts, scholars, educators, and policymakers in information literacy education and related fields from around the world to exchange academic ideas and share experiences, discuss the latest developments and challenges in information literacy education theory and practice, and promote the

development of information literacy education globally.

ECIL is held annually in the autumn. From 2013 to 2017, five successful sessions have been convened, with the sixth session in 2018 currently in preparation (see). ECIL calls for papers globally, with participants from over 50 countries and regions, and more than 200 selected submissions each year, demonstrating the conference's strong appeal in the global information literacy education field. ECIL provides participants with a diverse range of activities and discussion topics, including academic papers, posters, workshops, keynote speeches, and best practice sharing sessions. The conference content covers a wide range of issues involving the latest developments, challenges, and future directions of global information literacy education, offering an excellent platform for international colleagues in the field.

ECIL Conference Overview (2013-2018)

Session	Year	Location	Selected Submissions
1st	2013	Istanbul, Turkey	-
2nd	2014	Dubrovnik, Croatia	50
3rd	2015	Tallinn, Estonia	-
4th	2016	Prague, Czech Republic	-
5th	2017	Saint-Malo, France	>300
6th	2018	Oulu, Finland (upcoming)	-

The authors attended the 5th ECIL conference held in Saint-Malo, France, in September 2017. Through personal experience combined with analysis of materials from previous sessions, this paper provides a comprehensive analysis and detailed introduction to ECIL, offering domestic colleagues references for understanding global trends and exchange dynamics in information literacy education.

2. Geographic Distribution of Participants and Global Reach of Information Literacy Education

As shown in [Figure 1: see original paper], ECIL participants from 2013 to 2017 came from over 50 countries and regions across five continents: Europe, Asia, America, Africa, and Oceania. Europe had the largest number of participating countries and regions, accounting for more than half of the total. The combined number from Asia, America, Africa, and Oceania also approached half of the total. European participation remained stable at around 30 countries each year, representing two-thirds of Europe's 45 countries. Non-European participants included not only economically developed countries and regions such as the United States, Canada, Japan, Australia, and South Africa, but also developing countries and regions including China, Brazil, Mexico, and Pakistan. ECIL provides equal voice and exchange platforms for researchers from different

economic levels and sociocultural backgrounds, giving the conference content its characteristic diversity and inclusiveness.

Each year, the number of selected submissions (see) exceeded 200, surpassing 300 in 2017, demonstrating the large number of participants and extensive influence of ECIL as a major international exchange event in information literacy education. Through this important window, we can also observe the global popularization and burgeoning development of information literacy education.

3. Evolution of Research Areas: Conference Themes and Hotspots

ECIL typically announces the theme for the following year's conference in November of the previous year, with the official website already updated through the September 2018 conference theme. Under each conference theme, several sub-themes are listed to guide submissions, reflecting the focus of each session. Comparing the main themes, sub-themes, and conference proceedings from 2013 to 2018 [7-11], the evolution of ECIL's positioning and changes in information literacy education research fields becomes evident.

3.1 Focus on Practical Applications of Information Literacy Education

As shown in , the conference themes in 2013-2014 primarily focused on conceptual elaboration and current development status of information literacy. From 2015 onward, greater emphasis was placed on the role of information literacy education in social life: 2015 discussed information literacy education for smart lifestyles and environmental sustainability; 2016 addressed information literacy education in inclusive societies; 2017 examined information literacy education in the workplace; and 2018 focused on information literacy education in daily life. These topics indicate that information literacy education applications have become more specific and widespread, gradually embedding into concrete scenarios of social life.

For example, among the 2017 submissions on workplace information literacy, papers addressed information literacy and employability, information literacy and career development, information literacy and career preparation, information literacy and cultivation of critical and innovative talents, information literacy and 21st-century workplaces, information utilization in workplaces, information literacy and organizational success, information literacy and competitiveness, and critical information literacy in the workplace. These demonstrate the close integration of information literacy with workplace competencies, grounding information literacy cultivation in specific workplace contexts.

ECIL Conference Themes (2013-2018)

Year	Theme
2013, 2014	Information Literacy, Media Literacy, and Lifelong Learning
2015	Information Literacy, Media Literacy, and Smart Lifestyles for Environmental Sustainability
2016	Information Literacy Education in Inclusive Societies
2017	Information Literacy Education in the Workplace
2018	Information Literacy Education in Daily Life

3.2 Expansion of Research Fields in Information Literacy Education

Each year, while retaining important previous topics, ECIL introduces new issues based on latest developments. By comparing sub-themes across years (see), it is evident that from 2013 to 2018, the academic vision of information literacy shifted from traditional basic theory and practice issues, and information literacy education in institutions such as libraries or LIS teaching units, toward more strategic and macroscopic perspectives examining the profound impact of information literacy education on various social domains.

In 2015, the conference focused on information literacy education’s impact on lifestyles, adding topics related to information literacy and smart living/environmental sustainability. In 2016, it addressed impacts on political life, adding topics on information literacy and inclusive societies/social change. In 2017, it examined impacts on career development, adding topics on workplace information literacy, neoliberal agendas, and digital copyright. By 2018, the scope expanded to civic consciousness and health welfare—transnational issues concerning human rights and interests worldwide. This demonstrates ECIL’s continuous expansion of information literacy education research fields and its trend toward endowing information literacy education with greater social connotations and significance.

ECIL Sub-themes (2013-2018)

Sub-theme	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Information literacy education theory and policy research	√	√	√	√	√	√
Information literacy education practice cases	√	√	√	√	√	√
Information literacy education and library work	√	√	√	√	√	√
Information literacy education and LIS education	√	√	√	√	√	√
Information literacy education and knowledge management	√	√	√	√	√	√
Information literacy education in specific contexts	√	√	√	√	√	√
Information literacy education and instructional design	√	√	√	√	√	√

Sub-theme	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Information literacy education and social development	√	√	√	√	√	√
Information literacy education and emerging technologies	√	√	√	√	√	√
Information literacy education and smart lifestyles	-	-	√	√	√	√
Information literacy education and community engagement	-	-	√	√	√	√
Information literacy education and social change	-	-	-	√	√	√
Information literacy education and inclusive societies	-	-	-	√	√	√
Workplace information literacy education	-	-	-	-	√	√
Information literacy education and neoliberal agendas	-	-	-	-	√	√
Information literacy education and digital copyright	-	-	-	-	√	√
Daily life information literacy education	-	-	-	-	-	√
Information literacy education and active citizenship	-	-	-	-	-	√
Information literacy education and health/welfare	-	-	-	-	-	√

3.3 Extension of Related Concepts in Information Literacy Education

Analysis of keywords from ECIL academic papers over the years reveals that besides the concept of information literacy itself, related concepts such as media literacy, copyright literacy, digital literacy, data literacy, visual literacy, health literacy, science literacy, and research literacy have appeared with increasing frequency, showing a year-by-year upward trend. ECIL 2017 even organized special sessions dedicated to “scientific data literacy,” “science literacy,” and “health literacy,” featuring 20 expert presentations on scientific data literacy, 6 on science literacy, and 7 on health literacy. This indicates that extended concepts of information literacy have gradually gained acceptance and become integral components of information literacy education.

3.4 Expansion of Target Audiences for Information Literacy Education

In summary, ECIL submissions demonstrate a diversification trend, covering information literacy education across different cultures and countries, various application scenarios, different hierarchical groups, and different disciplines. While these target audiences differ from one another, they can also provide mutual inspiration across different service models. Beyond undergraduate students, graduate students, and researchers, numerous papers address primary and secondary school students, employees, and the general public, with increasing numbers of papers focusing on information literacy education for children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. For example, at the 2017 conference, papers such as “The Impact of Assistive Technology on Information Needs of Visually Impaired Individuals: A Case Study of Turkish University Libraries” and “Parents of Children with Disabilities or Long-term Illnesses: The Importance of Supporting Media and Information Literacy” focused on disabled populations who face difficulties accessing information literacy education. These studies point out that while disadvantaged groups encounter greater challenges in ac-

cessing information literacy education, they are precisely the ones who most critically need information literacy to discern truth from falsehood and improve their lives. Helping these groups enhance their information literacy is crucial for universalizing information literacy education, improving civic quality, and demonstrating educational equity.

3.5 Innovation in Teaching Concepts and Methods for Information Literacy Education

With the continuous emergence of new technologies, many information literacy researchers are committed to exploring new educational concepts and instructional designs, actively adopting novel educational technologies and teaching methods to advance curriculum reform and assessment in information literacy education.

In terms of educational philosophy and instructional design, for example, the University of Colorado Boulder explored makerspace-based information literacy education tailored to the specific needs of creative practitioners (such as artists, architects, and engineers). Faculty at the University of Strathclyde in the UK applied phenomenological theory [13] to teaching political information utilization. The Institute of Library and Information Science at Vilnius University in Lithuania developed doctoral information literacy courses using citation analysis methods. Drexel University in the US employed the I-LEARN model [14] to guide information literacy education. Participants from Iran University of Medical Sciences, the University of Queensland in Australia, and Ahvaz University in Iran jointly presented a case study on embedding the BIG6 model [15] into Iranian primary school science curricula.

Regarding teaching technologies and methods, MOOC-based instruction emerged as a hot topic. For instance, the Free University of Brussels in Belgium introduced MOOC teaching in its library, while University College London is developing multilingual information literacy MOOC courses featuring English, German, Spanish, Catalan, Slovenian, and Croatian. Computer games are increasingly being used in formal education, such as the educational game developed by Charles University and the Czech Academy of Sciences for teaching historical information literacy. To increase teaching appeal, comics with storylines have also become an instructional tool. Scholars from the National Academy of Educational Sciences in Kyiv, Ukraine, discussed the feasibility of using comics as an educational medium, while the University of Silesia and Warsaw University Library in Poland adopted comic storybooks for children and youth information literacy education. The comic book consists of 24 stories, each illustrating a specific issue such as information searching, organization, access, and plagiarism.

Additionally, conference submissions covered diverse information literacy education theories and methods including embedded teaching, cross-disciplinary collaborative teaching, curriculum effectiveness evaluation, marketing promotion,

and teacher capacity building.

4. Diverse Academic Exchange Formats at ECIL

The 2017 ECIL conference lasted four days. Apart from the keynote session on the first morning, 56 modules of discussion and exchange activities were organized across four parallel venues, allowing participants to choose sessions according to the conference program. ECIL provides rich and varied academic exchange formats, demonstrating excellent organizational capacity.

The main formats include: (1) Academic papers (research articles and literature reviews), requiring a 500-word abstract for initial review, followed by full paper submission upon acceptance. Accepted full papers are included in the conference presentations and formally published in the Springer conference proceedings [12], which typically contain around 80 academic papers from previous sessions. (2) Academic posters (including work-in-progress reports and innovative achievements), requiring a 500-word abstract for review, followed by poster submission (70cm × 100cm). In 2017, 26 posters were displayed, with authors available for Q&A during designated periods. Most posters featured exquisite designs; one US scholar even created a three-dimensional poster with expandable sections and detachable printed materials, offering a refreshing approach. (3) Best practice sessions, where practitioners share successful experiences and exemplary cases. A 500-word abstract is required for review, and accepted submissions are included in the conference program. In 2017, 44 best practices were selected for presentation across five conference modules. (4) Keynote speeches by invited renowned experts. In 2017, B. Cheu from Hong Kong delivered a keynote titled “Who Cares about Workplace Information Literacy Education?” drawing on over 20 years of business knowledge management experience in multinational corporations across Hong Kong, Singapore, the US, the UK, and Europe. (5) Workshops, where organizers facilitate discussions on future implementable skills and methods for specific issues. Proposers must submit a 500-word proposal including theme, objectives, outcomes, target audience, and equipment requirements. In 2017, five workshops were held, characterized by full participant engagement and mutual exchange. (6) Panel discussions on specific conference themes. A 500-word proposal must include theme, objectives, moderator, papers, and panel members. In 2017, four panel discussions were organized, featuring a chair and several expert panelists presenting viewpoints on specialized topics followed by Q&A. (7) Special thematic sessions composed of multiple papers on a specific topic. A 500-word proposal must include theme, objectives, chair, papers, and presenters. In 2017, five special thematic sessions were held, including three on “scientific data literacy,” one on “science literacy,” and one on “health literacy.” (8) Doctoral forums, requiring doctoral students to submit short papers (maximum 5 pages/2,500 words) introducing their research progress, including critical literature reviews, research objectives, and methodology. In 2017, five doctoral students exchanged ideas with peers, receiving valuable guidance and feedback. (9) Lightning talks, a novel format in-

troduced in 2018 where presenters deliver project reports, latest developments, innovative achievements, and best practices via PowerPoint within strict time limits—20 slides at 20 seconds each (6 minutes 40 seconds total), requiring concise, creative, and engaging presentations. (10) Company product exhibitions, where sponsoring companies showcase their latest products and services. For example, Citavi Company presented new features of its reference management software Citavi 6. (11) Additional activities including welcome receptions, coffee breaks, buffet lunches, and farewell dinners, providing further platforms and opportunities for international colleagues to communicate.

The provision of such diverse academic exchange formats constitutes an important factor attracting scholars worldwide to ECIL, enabling participants to achieve the dual goals of self-presentation and mutual exchange. ECIL's excellent conference organization relies on its robust institutional framework. For instance, the 2017 conference sponsors included UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and IFLA (The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions). The organizers were the Information Literacy Association, Hacettepe University, and the University of Zagreb, while the host was the University of Paris, France, with co-organizers including Citavi Company and Paris Descartes University Institute of Technology. According to available information, ECIL entrusts professional conference management companies to organize its large-scale international events, ensuring orderly execution.

5. Increasing Chinese Academic Presence Through Participation

From 2013 to 2015, only scholars from National Chiayi University and National Taichung University of Education in Taiwan participated in ECIL submissions. In 2016, scholars from the Department of Information Management at Sun Yat-sen University became the first mainland Chinese scholars to join this international academic exchange platform. In 2017, over ten scholars and graduate students from mainland China attended ECIL, primarily from institutions such as Sun Yat-sen University, Peking University, Northeast Normal University, and the National Science Library of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. Mainland China had eight submissions selected for conference presentations, including three academic papers, two best practice projects, and three posters, covering topics such as information literacy, data literacy, health literacy, and reading promotion. During the conference, Chinese scholars and graduate students actively participated in various exchange activities including academic papers, posters, workshops, keynote speeches, and best practice sharing sessions, showcasing the latest developments and achievements of Chinese universities and research institutions in information literacy education and effectively enhancing China's academic visibility in this field.

6. Implications and Recommendations for China's Information Literacy Education

Both in content and format, ECIL offers significant reference value for China's information literacy education. Regarding conference content, currently China's most prominent academic conference on information literacy education is the "National Information Literacy Education Symposium for Universities" organized by the Information Literacy Education Working Group of the Ministry of Education's Steering Committee for University Library and Information Services. This conference primarily focuses on university information literacy education, with limited coverage of other service targets and limited exploration of information literacy education applications in other areas of social life. In the future, China's information literacy education should adopt a more macroscopic and strategic perspective to explore development paths, paying greater attention to the social role of information literacy and its applications for diverse population groups, while strengthening social service functions. The field should also focus on extended concepts related to information literacy, continuously expanding educational domains and teaching arenas, and intensify research and application of new educational concepts and technological tools to enhance teaching appeal and effectiveness.

Regarding conference formats, the library community could also learn from ECIL's diverse meeting formats, enabling more practitioners to have suitable ways and opportunities to showcase their achievements, stimulating participants' enthusiasm for theoretical dissemination, experience sharing, and thematic discussions during conferences, and ultimately forming a distinctive information literacy education exchange event with Chinese characteristics.

In the era of global informatization, information literacy serves as a fundamental condition for autonomous learning and social communication, receiving extensive exploration and in-depth research worldwide [16]. Since 2013, the European Conference on Information Literacy has broadly gathered practitioners from information literacy education and related fields worldwide, showcasing the latest theoretical and practical developments and trends through rich and diverse academic exchange formats. It is gratifying that Chinese scholars have demonstrated the latest progress and achievements of Chinese universities and research institutions in information literacy education through ECIL, effectively enhancing Chinese scholars' academic visibility. It is hoped that more domestic colleagues will actively participate in this international event in the future to further enhance China's academic influence in information literacy education and contribute to the development of global information literacy education. Simultaneously, China's information literacy education community can learn from ECIL's experiences by adopting more macroscopic and strategic perspectives to explore development directions in content, and employing more diversified conference formats to promote sharing and discussion in practice, thereby adding new impetus to China's information literacy education.

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Author Contributions

Li Ling: Conceptualization, framework design, and paper writing

Wang Junyu: Conference literature research and analysis, participation in paper writing

Chen Chao: Participation in conference literature research, analysis, and discussion

Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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