DIGITAL MEDIA LITERACY GUIDEBOOK

Digital Media Literacy Guidebook

"The Our Media project began with a research study aimed at identifying key trends, risks, and opportunities for media sustainability, as well as mapping good practices in media activism that support media freedom and media and information literacy (MIL). The findings of this research are used to strengthen the capacities of media-focused CSOs and other stakeholders in addressing challenges in the media landscape.

Within the scope of Our Media, advocacy activities are carried out to better understand the capacities of journalists, media organizations, and media institutions. Local and national media actors are encouraged to engage in media activism to address gender inequalities in the media. The project also empowers young leaders to challenge discrimination and sexist stereotypes and to promote gender equality through a variety of activities.

Through financial support provided to CSOs in both urban and rural areas, the project reaches local communities with the aim of enhancing citizens' MIL skills, supporting media freedom and integrity, and countering polarization fueled by propaganda, hate speech, and disinformation.

Acknowledgements and Scope

"Prepared within the scope of the Our Media: Civil Society Movement to Promote Media Literacy and Activism, Prevent Polarization and Promote Dialogue project, this guide aims to offer a practical framework for professionals, educators, policymakers, media workers, and the general public working in the field of media literacy (ML) to develop and evaluate media literacy interventions.

The texts in this guide provide concrete recommendations, references, and further readings for stakeholders, while also including verification steps, training suggestions, and support mechanisms.

We consider this guide both an outcome of the Media Literacy Coalition established in 2024 under the Our Media project and a reflection of the IPS Communication Foundation's continued commitment to media literacy advocacy.

Our hope is to empower citizens not only as consumers of information but as individuals who critically analyze, responsibly share, and develop an ethical stance within the complexity of the digital world. We believe that, although media literacy alone cannot solve every problem, it remains one of the most vital tools for protecting truth, pluralism, and solidarity against the damage caused by misinformation—for both individuals and societies.

We would like to extend our gratitude to Prof. Dr. Yasemin Giritli İnceoğlu, who introduced the key concepts in the Digital Media Literacy article series published biweekly between June and September 2025, as well as to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tirşe Erbaysal Filibeli, Koray Kaplıca, Nihan Güneli, Diyar Saraçoğlu, Öyküm Hüma Keskin, and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Esra Ercan Bilgiç for their valuable contributions.

The framework of this guide was shaped through the contributions of our coalition members and academics with whom we have built solidarity in the field of rights-based advocacy. We would like to express our sincere thanks to Prof. Dr. Kenan Çayır, Prof. Dr. Aslı Tunç, Prof. Dr. Nazan Haydari, Dr. Necdet İpekyüz (member of RTÜK), Faruk Bildirici (Independent Media Ombudsman), Erol Önderoğlu (RSF Turkey Representative and bianet Media Monitoring Reports Rapporteur), Elif Erol (Hrant Dink Foundation), and Yıldız Tar (Kaos GL) for making this work possible through their commitment, collaboration, and contributions to digital media literacy.

Digital media is transforming every aspect of life, from journalism to everyday living. We hope that this guide will contribute to the development of a critical and rights-based approach to media literacy.

Dr. Sinem Aydınlı
IPS İletişim Vakfı / bianet

Digital Media Literacy and Its Place in Today's World

Prof. Dr. Yasemin Giritli İnceoğlu

Digital media literacy is not only an individual skill but also a social necessity. In an age of increasing information pollution and manipulation, it is vital for individuals to develop critical thinking and conscious media consumption skills to help build a more democratic society.

Critical thinking lies at the core of digital media literacy. This way of thinking enables individuals to recognize manipulative techniques and build resistance against them, while fostering the ability to evaluate diverse perspectives rather than remaining confined to a single point of view. In doing so, it contributes to the development of fairer and more informed opinions about groups that are either misrepresented or excluded from media representation.

Critical literacy is the ability to question the information presented in the media, evaluate the reliability of sources, and understand the ideological context of messages. For example, questioning the accuracy of news circulating on social media and adopting a critical approach to fake news are practical applications of this concept. This process prevents individuals from becoming susceptible to manipulation and reduces the spread of misinformation.

Media production refers to individuals positioning themselves as active content creators on digital platforms. Users who produce content such as videos, blog posts, podcasts, and visual shares on platforms like YouTube and TikTok are examples of media production. Thus, individuals cease to be passive consumers and become active actors in shaping the media. This also ensures that unique voices are heard and that different social groups are represented.

The concept of digital participation encompasses individuals' engagement in social and political processes in digital environments. This covers a wide range of activities, from supporting online campaigns to organizing through social media and digital activism. For example, young people supporting environmental movements or reporting human rights violations through social media are concrete examples of digital participation. This form of participation plays a critical role in enhancing democratic participation and accelerating social change.

"Digital media literacy is a shared responsibility for everyone."

Do I approach information in digital environments critically?

Do I question the source?

Do I follow media outlets that give space to diverse voices?

Critical Digital Literacy:
Building Trust and Citizenship

Prof. Dr. Kenan Çayır

We are now far from the atmosphere of relative optimism brought about by the digital revolution of the 1990s. In its early days, this revolution inspired hopes of a *"digital renaissance"* comparable to the invention of the printing press. It was believed that easier access to information, strengthened intercultural dialogue, and equal participation through digital media would weaken authoritarian structures.

However, recent studies reveal that this optimistic picture has largely reversed. Research shows that feelings of fear and insecurity have become dominant emotions in societies, even in "established democracies." According to a 2022 report, a vast majority of people express concerns about losing their jobs, the climate crisis, and fake news, while trust in democratic institutions has fallen to historically low levels.

In Turkey, citizens' trust in politics and in one another is already low due to historical and sociological factors. A recent study found that 63% of respondents do not trust political parties, while only 18% believe that "most people can be trusted." This sense of distrust extends to fears of losing one's country, culture, or state. Many people believe that politics should prioritize defense rather than social welfare. For instance, research indicates that more people in Turkey support public spending on national defense than on social welfare. In this context, there is a growing tendency to entrust problem-solving to strong leadership, while demands for democratic participation continue to decline.

What Kind of Critical Digital Literacy?

As Yasemin Giritli İnceoğlu explains, critical digital literacy encompasses competencies such as questioning the sources of information presented in the media, approaching content critically, understanding the ideological contexts of news, and engaging in digital participation that strengthens democracy. The concept of digital participation is particularly worth emphasizing. İnceoğlu gives examples such as "young people supporting environmental movements through social media or raising awareness of human rights violations." The concept of digital participation allows us to frame critical digital literacy as a process that empowers and builds both citizenship and democracy in response to ongoing social developments.

In recent years, verification platforms such as Doğruluk Payı and Teyit.org have produced high-quality content and conducted trainings on questioning media sources and accessing accurate information. The Teachers' Network and Teyit.org jointly developed the Digital Literacy in Education: A Teacher-to-Teacher Handbook, helping to strengthen what they call "doubt muscles," which enable individuals to distinguish between true and false information.

Digital literacy has also been identified as one of the key objectives of the Maarif Model, implemented in the 2024–2025 academic year. The concepts of digital literacy and digital citizenship are included under the "Conscious Use of Technological Products" section of the Social Studies 5.2 textbook, within the unit titled "Technology and Social Sciences."

In the textbook, students are encouraged to test their digital literacy skills through prompts such as "I can verify the accuracy of information on the internet by examining different sources," "I can access and use digital data, information, and content," and "I can participate in social activities through digital technologies." However, the content and activities in the book do not appear to be sufficiently developed to truly enhance these skills. Still, these sections provide opportunities for digitally literate teachers to design lessons that can help students strengthen their digital citizenship competencies.

When we frame digital literacy as a citizenship skill within today's precarious and polarized social environment, educational efforts must go beyond simply verifying news. They should also aim to foster citizens' abilities in public deliberation and digital participation. This, however, is not an easy task. As Koray Kaplıca notes, the boundaries between data, opinion, and fiction have become increasingly blurred in digital spaces.

To redraw these boundaries, educators and practitioners can draw on initiatives such as the project "Building Societal Cognitive Resilience Against Information Disorders" and creative approaches like the "inoculation technique," which empowers citizens against conspiracy theories.

In conclusion, developing critical digital literacy skills requires going beyond fact-checking the news that fuels polarization and distrust. It calls for continuously cultivating content and practices that foster citizenship, trust, and digital participation in the pursuit of pluralist democracy.

> **"Critical digital literacy should go beyond accessing accurate information; it should serve as a tool to strengthen democracy, trust, and civic awareness."**

✓ *Do I question who produces the content I encounter online, for what purpose, and whose interests it represents?*

✓ *Do my posts, interactions, and comments support social trust, dialogue, and pluralism?*

✓ *Am I able to stand on the side of solidarity, not hatred, in an environment shaped by the anger and fear that disinformation creates?*

Where Do Universities Stand on Digital Media Literacy?

Prof. Dr. Aslı TUNÇ

We can assume that people at different stages of life, that is, from different generations, do not approach the issue of digital media literacy in the same way. This can easily be observed in our daily lives. We often watch with admiration the ease with which those born into the very heart of technology — the so-called Generation Z (born after 1997) — navigate digital tools. In contrast, those born between 1946 and 1964 — known as the Baby Boomer Generation — often struggle to adapt to new media environments. This, of course, is inevitable. As generations change, so too do their relationships with digital technologies.

The dynamics of life and the shifting nature of career models place entirely new expectations on recent university graduates. But then, is being familiar — even highly proficient — with digital technologies enough for Generation Z? Is the idea that they are "digital natives" merely a myth?

To answer these questions, we must first ask: what kinds of preparations are higher education institutions in Turkey and around the world making in the field of digital media literacy? How quickly are curricula, extracurricular activities, and certificate programs being shaped? Under which faculties or departments are these initiatives administratively structured? With which disciplines is digital media literacy being associated, and what competencies are students expected to have upon graduation?

In short, how prepared are universities for the dizzying pace of technological change when it comes to digital literacy?

Digital literacy goes far beyond the effective use and management of social media platforms. Areas such as digital media analysis, the evaluation and interpretation of digital content, data literacy, the ability to read, analyze, and draw conclusions from data, and digital security, the protection of personal data, all illustrate how broad this field truly is. These competencies are not only essential for future communicators and journalists but are also a necessity for university students across all disciplines

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The main reason I emphasized earlier that mastering digital technologies alone is not sufficient lies precisely here. At the core of all these issues are critical thinking, a questioning approach to digital content, and the ability to analyze. This is what we truly mean by digital "literacy."

Universities must aim to teach students to recognize and question fake news, hate speech, and misrepresentations spread through social media; to protect their identities as individuals; to take an ethical stance in the digital world; to exercise their rights, raise their voices, and organize within digital spaces.

Because universities serve as a bridge between academic learning and the professional world, they represent a critical stage for developing core competencies aligned with labor market expectations (Chan, 2016). In academic settings, digital literacy should be adapted both to general educational goals and to the specific needs of disciplines. For instance, while all students can benefit from learning about digital communication and cybersecurity, those studying data science, engineering, or business may require more specialized training in coding, data visualization, or digital project management tools.
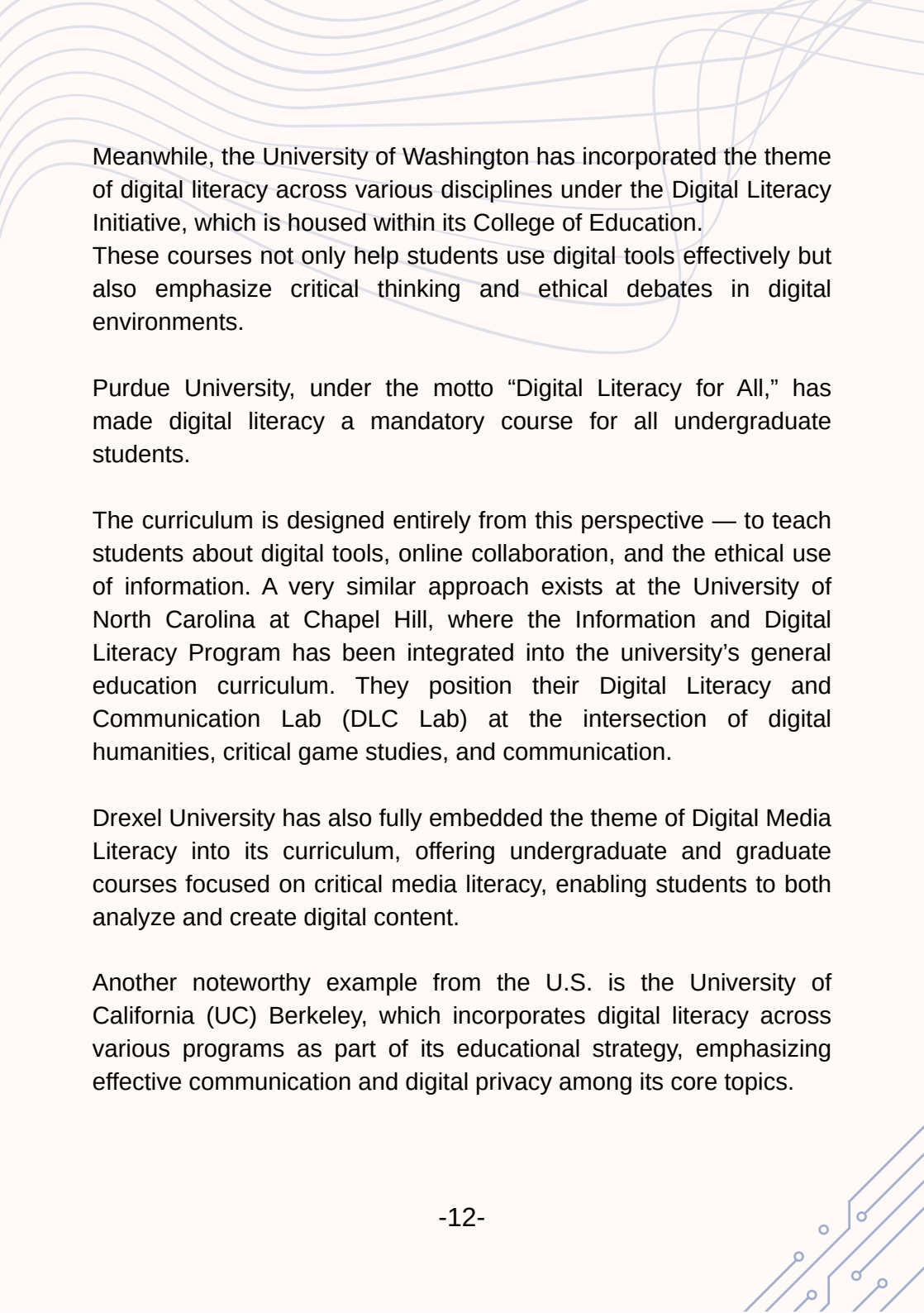
So, how many universities — in Turkey and around the world — are truly accomplishing this? It is difficult to give an exact number or ratio, but we can move forward by looking at a few noteworthy examples.

For example, the City University of New York (CUNY) began by investing in the education of primary school teachers, launching a four-year, $14 million initiative to equip future educators with digital literacy skills. The university offered scholarships and certificates to teacher candidates who completed the program, and its Department of Computer Engineering opened several courses in support of the effort. Recognized as one of the most outstanding examples of social impact and civic responsibility among universities, CUNY's initiative is still ongoing as of 2024.

In the United States, Florida State University and the University of North Dakota stand out as institutions that have integrated digital media literacy into every stage of their curricula within their Schools of Communication.

Similarly, Clark University offers a Digital Literacy Certificate focusing on digital ethics and literacy practices, while Indiana Wesleyan University provides an online Master's program in Technology and Digital Literacy in Education, emphasizing the integration of technology into teaching.

Stanford University has developed a curriculum centered on teaching students how to evaluate the reliability of online information. The program includes practical exercises and resources that help students distinguish credible sources from misinformation.
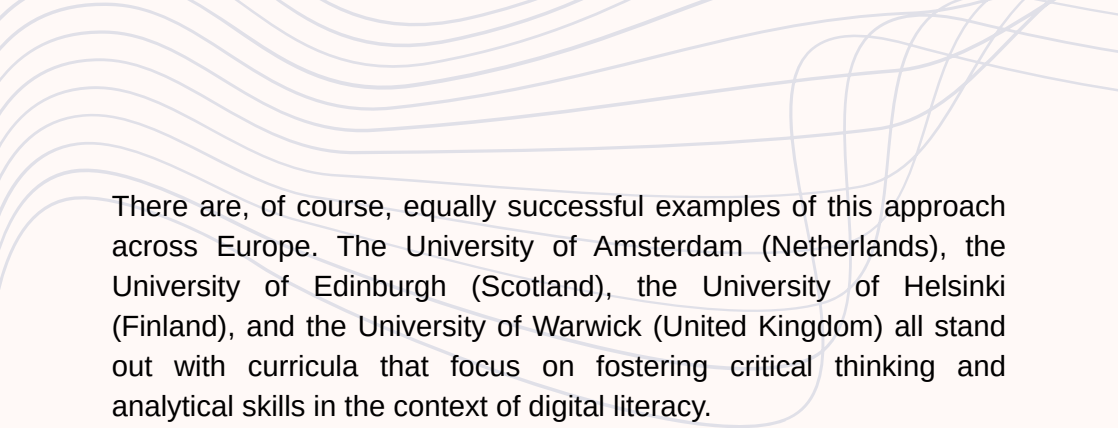
Meanwhile, the University of Washington has incorporated the theme of digital literacy across various disciplines under the Digital Literacy Initiative, which is housed within its College of Education.
These courses not only help students use digital tools effectively but also emphasize critical thinking and ethical debates in digital environments.

Purdue University, under the motto "Digital Literacy for All," has made digital literacy a mandatory course for all undergraduate students.

The curriculum is designed entirely from this perspective — to teach students about digital tools, online collaboration, and the ethical use of information. A very similar approach exists at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where the Information and Digital Literacy Program has been integrated into the university's general education curriculum. They position their Digital Literacy and Communication Lab (DLC Lab) at the intersection of digital humanities, critical game studies, and communication.

Drexel University has also fully embedded the theme of Digital Media Literacy into its curriculum, offering undergraduate and graduate courses focused on critical media literacy, enabling students to both analyze and create digital content.

Another noteworthy example from the U.S. is the University of California (UC) Berkeley, which incorporates digital literacy across various programs as part of its educational strategy, emphasizing effective communication and digital privacy among its core topics.

There are, of course, equally successful examples of this approach across Europe. The University of Amsterdam (Netherlands), the University of Edinburgh (Scotland), the University of Helsinki (Finland), and the University of Warwick (United Kingdom) all stand out with curricula that focus on fostering critical thinking and analytical skills in the context of digital literacy.

When discussing higher education in Europe, it is also essential to mention the European Union's Digital Education Action Plan (2021–2027), a renewed EU policy initiative that sets out a shared vision for high-quality, inclusive, and accessible digital education across the Union. The plan aims to support member states in adapting their education and training systems to the digital age.

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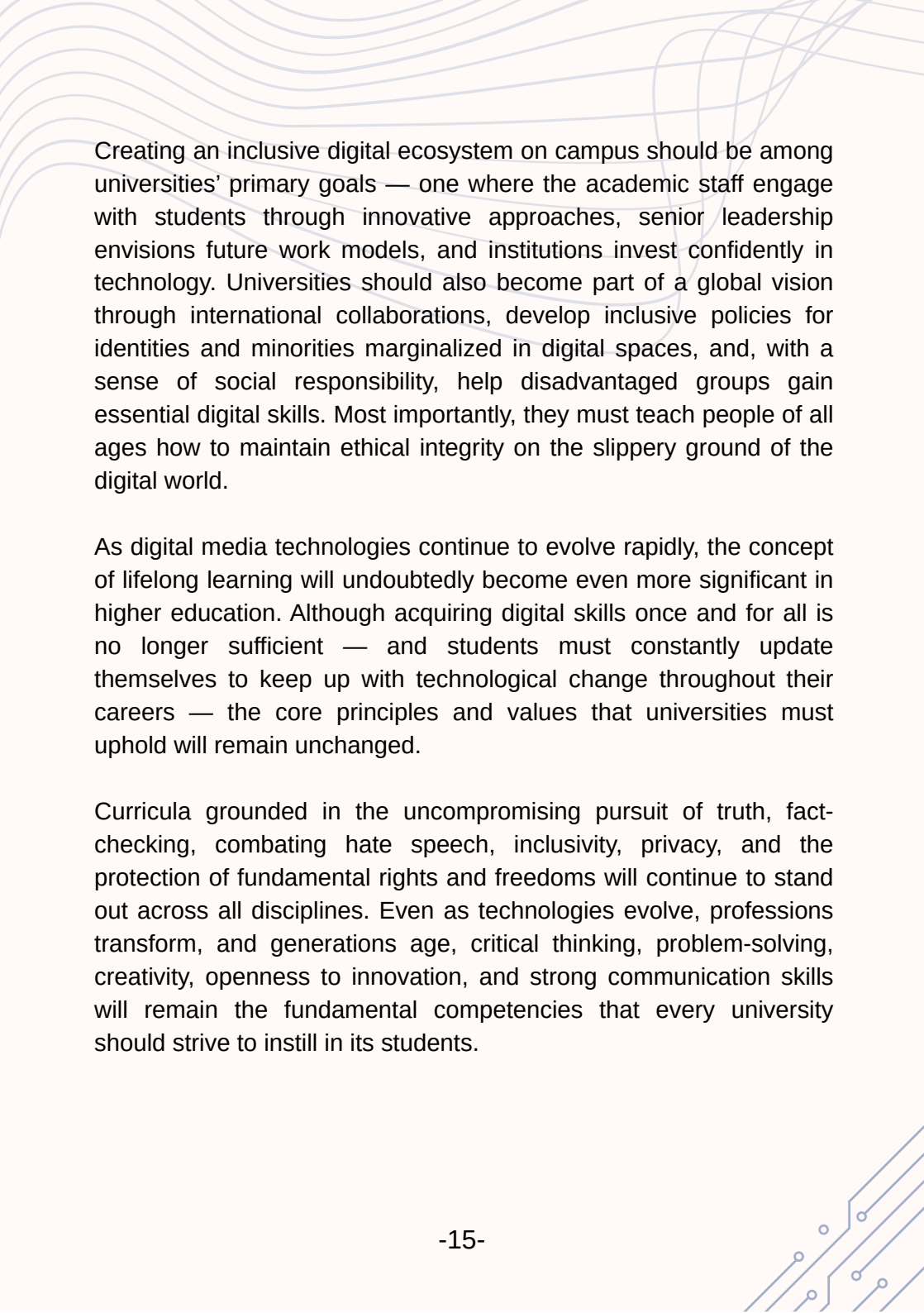
Drexel University has also fully embedded the theme of *Digital Media Literacy* into its curriculum, offering undergraduate and graduate courses focused on critical media literacy, enabling students to both analyze and create digital content.

This Action Plan calls for greater European-level cooperation on digital education in order to address the challenges and opportunities brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, and to create opportunities for teachers, students, policymakers, academics, and researchers at national, EU, and international levels. The key priorities at this stage are to support the development of an effective digital education ecosystem and to enhance digital skills and competencies for digital transformation.

Across Europe, universities are also engaging in collaborations on digital media literacy through online courses — notably within the 4EU+ Alliance. For instance, Sorbonne University, Charles University, and the University of Copenhagen have joined forces to advance this field together.

So, what is the situation in universities in Turkey? Fortunately, there are several visionary examples in our country as well. Within their Faculties of Communication, universities such as Istanbul Bilgi University, Kadir Has University, Doğuş University, and Marmara University have already incorporated digital media literacy courses into their curricula. Hacettepe University offers digital literacy courses within its Computer and Information Technologies programs, while Middle East Technical University (METU) includes this topic in both engineering and social sciences curricula.

As one might expect, equipping new generations with digital media literacy skills and preparing them for the future world of work cannot be achieved merely by including the topic in the curriculum.

Creating an inclusive digital ecosystem on campus should be among universities' primary goals — one where the academic staff engage with students through innovative approaches, senior leadership envisions future work models, and institutions invest confidently in technology. Universities should also become part of a global vision through international collaborations, develop inclusive policies for identities and minorities marginalized in digital spaces, and, with a sense of social responsibility, help disadvantaged groups gain essential digital skills. Most importantly, they must teach people of all ages how to maintain ethical integrity on the slippery ground of the digital world.

As digital media technologies continue to evolve rapidly, the concept of lifelong learning will undoubtedly become even more significant in higher education. Although acquiring digital skills once and for all is no longer sufficient — and students must constantly update themselves to keep up with technological change throughout their careers — the core principles and values that universities must uphold will remain unchanged.

Curricula grounded in the uncompromising pursuit of truth, fact-checking, combating hate speech, inclusivity, privacy, and the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms will continue to stand out across all disciplines. Even as technologies evolve, professions transform, and generations age, critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, openness to innovation, and strong communication skills will remain the fundamental competencies that every university should strive to instill in its students.

Are digital media analysis, data literacy, and digital security taught not only in communication faculties but across all departments?

Is the curriculum ethical, inclusive, and critical?

Does the university cultivate individuals who remain open to renewal in the axes of digital transformation and social responsibility even after graduation?

"Critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity and openness to innovation, along with strong communication skills, are enduring values that universities must instill in their students."

Journalism and Digital Literacy

Faruk Bildirici
Media Ombudsman

The transformation of journalism and digital platforms as sources of information

Traditional media is fading before our eyes, much like sepia-toned photographs, print journalism is living out its final days.

Digital media has radically transformed both the production and consumption of news. Daily reporting has been replaced by instant content. We used to say, "News has the lifespan of a butterfly," but now its life is measured in hours, even minutes before it moves to the archive. The good news is that, once there, it doesn't truly disappear; it remains ever-accessible, ready to be found by anyone who seeks it.

The Advantages Brought by Digitalization

The advantages that digital platforms bring to journalism extend far beyond the constant accessibility of digital archives. Above all, they have made it easier for journalists to access and verify information. A journalist in Istanbul can now reach a source on the other side of the world, ask questions, conduct research, and gather data — all made technically possible through digital tools.

The second — and perhaps most significant — advantage of digitalization for journalists is the ability to share their voice, work, and production with the public in a way that is cheaper, faster, and easier than ever before. There are no printing costs, no distribution fees, and no time lost in transit. A news website based in Istanbul can publish a story with a single click, instantly reaching readers across the globe. Likewise, a local newspaper in Anatolia can effortlessly reach its audience — even those living as far away as New Zealand.

In the past, one of the greatest dreams among us journalists was to publish an independent newspaper. Whenever a few of us gathered, we would calculate the cost of launching a paper using our savings or severance pay, only to realize it was impossible. Even getting started was far too expensive.

Today, however, things are different. Journalists who lose their jobs can launch their own platforms, individually or through cooperative models, by opening an account on social media and publishing written or video content. That, too, is a major advantage brought by digitalization.

The Challenges of Digitalization

Starting is easy, sustaining it is hard. Today, readers, listeners, and viewers, in short, news consumers, are faced with an overwhelming number of outlets, channels, accounts, and news sources, far more than ever before. Amid such abundance, finding a steady audience and maintaining relevance has become truly difficult.

In the past, news consumers were loyal to specific outlets. They would buy the same newspaper every day, watch the same TV channel, listen to the same radio station, and trust them. News consumption was a habit. Now, however, most audiences have no such loyalty or routine. To reach them, your voice must stand out — louder, more distinct, and more original — and you must sustain that energy and quality consistently over time.

And then comes the issue of generating income, perhaps the greatest obstacle to sustainability. While advertising or sponsorship revenue may be accessible to a few well-known figures, independent journalists rarely have access to such resources. As a result, they are often left at the mercy of opaque advertising revenue-sharing systems on social media platforms like YouTube.

The Transformation of News Writing

All these challenges have also transformed the production and presentation of journalistic work — news, interviews, videos, and investigative reports alike — just as Microsoft Word's spell-check quietly became the unseen authority on Turkish writing standards. The very foundations of news writing have been upended by the nature of digital platforms and the problems they bring.

The first signs of this shift appeared in headlines. Traditionally, the headline of a piece, whether a news article, interview, or investigative story, would summarize the content in the briefest and most striking way possible, without distorting its meaning.

In digital media, however, headlines often no longer summarize the content. Instead, they offer vague or suggestive clues, sometimes in the form of questions, and often as incomplete phrases without a subject or verb. Many news sites now prefer teaser-like, evocative headlines over informative ones, with the goal of prompting readers to click, read, or watch the full piece.

News writing itself has also changed. The "inverted pyramid" rule, which placed the most important information at the beginning, has been almost entirely abandoned. It has been replaced by a structure that buries the key point deeper in the text, a method driven by the desire to keep readers engaged for as long as possible.

Examples of Misinformation and Mistakes

The rush to be the first to publish, along with copying content without verifying accuracy or filling in missing details, has led to a rise in incomplete and misleading news that lack even the basic 5Ws and 1H (who, what, where, when, why, how). In some reports, even the time and place of the event are missing.

Leaving aside so-called "fragment news" — short posts summarizing events in just a few sentences — even content lifted from social media is often published without verification, resulting in gaps and misinformation.

For instance, many news sites reported accusations made by Ahmet Sonuç (known as Jahrein on X) claiming that Evre Başak Clarke, who had launched a fundraising campaign for her medical expenses and her young son Oscar's future, was a fraudster. These published the claims without any research or confirmation. Many people believed the story and verbally attacked Clarke online, yet the young woman's death soon exposed the falsehood of those claims.

A case of individual journalistic error also illustrates the issue: When a photo circulated on social media allegedly showing EU leaders sitting in a hallway waiting to meet U.S. President Donald Trump, many, including journalist Ceyda Karan, shared it believing it was real. The image, however, was AI-generated, and Karan reposted it with the caption "The photo of mediocrity," mistaking it for an authentic news image.

Sometimes, posts on social media are misread or misunderstood, leading to false interpretations. For example, aviation expert Ali Kıdık, in a 2012 post, criticized a statement made by then-Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI) CEO Temel Kotil, writing: "He didn't specify which part of the aircraft this is. At first glance, it looks like a radiator."

Cumhuriyet daily turned this post into a news story, which later circulated through Türkiye newspaper and several other pro-government media outlets under headlines like "Historic success for KAAN — the 'radiator' they mocked!" In the process, the distinction between the individual aircraft part and the entire plane was completely lost.

Embracing the New Without Forgetting the Past

These and countless similar examples show that digital media literacy must first be internalized by journalists themselves, even before news consumers. Journalists must first understand the language, rules, and methods of digital platforms, and learn how to avoid mistakes.

Digital platforms may be new, but the principles we must adhere to are still the classic rules of journalism. What does this mean? In traditional journalism, doubt, curiosity, and questioning are fundamental. These values should continue to guide us in the digital realm as well.

If we approach online posts, or rather data, through the same lens of skepticism and inquiry, there will be no problem. As the famous saying in American journalism goes: "If your mother says she loves you, check it out." If we question every piece of information with journalistic methods, we can reach the truth and avoid misleading others.

In short, the safest way to move forward in digital media is to adapt and apply the journalistic principles and ethics accumulated through universal experience to new tools and methods, continuing to practice journalism without rejecting the new, but without forgetting the past.

We must walk toward the future with the strength and wisdom drawn from the past.

Journalists must internalize universal principles of journalism, and the Declaration of the Rights and Responsibilities of Turkish Journalists should be made visibly available on all news websites.

- Civil society organizations should also update their communication methods in parallel with digital transformation.

- Regulatory bodies, rather than focusing on punishment, should adopt a reward-based and developmental approach, playing a constructive rather than restrictive role.

- Digitalization has made it easier for journalists to access information and faster to produce it, yet sustainability remains a major challenge, as revenue models lack transparency and algorithms operate without oversight. For this reason, journalists must adapt and apply the ethical principles and professional standards accumulated through universal journalistic experience to new tools and methods.

> **"Digital platforms may be entirely new, but the principles we must firmly adhere to are still the classic rules of journalism... If we approach every piece of information with skepticism and question it through journalistic methods, we can reach the truth — and avoid misleading people."**

Even under the pressure of speed, do I verify the source, time, and context of the news?

Do I avoid manipulative clickbait strategies when producing headlines and content? (For journalists)

Am I able to uphold the principles of doubt, curiosity, accuracy, and public interest while working with digital tools? (For journalists)

Digital Media and Literacy

Erol Önderoğlu
RSF Turkey Representative and bia Media Monitoring Reports Rapporteur

In societies where legal frameworks are relatively stronger, countries have gradually introduced advanced regulations to bring structure to the dizzying transformation of the digital media landscape. In contrast, it would not be an exaggeration to say that in Turkey, the digital sphere, including online journalism, has remained largely defenseless in this regard.

In this sense, beyond the pressures of repressive laws, editorial interference, and issues arising from regulatory bodies, the rapid transformation of the digital world over the past two decades, particularly with the rise of artificial intelligence and social media platforms, has brought profound changes, opportunities, and risks to journalism. Unfortunately, the absence of written safeguards and regulatory frameworks addressing these new realities has only compounded existing problems.

At the same time, the urgency to maintain an online presence has replaced traditional performance concerns such as TV ratings or newspaper sales at newsstands. Today, the struggle for visibility and survival in the digital sphere has become the dominant source of pressure and anxiety for media outlets.

Just as in the era of conventional media, there remains a neglected social component in Turkey's media landscape today: the reader and the viewer. Particularly in the face of rapid digital transformation, our media continues to struggle, producing content *for* its audience but failing to truly build a connection *with* it.

In Turkey's media landscape, where legal pressures are constant and editorial independence has been shattered by political power and media proprietors, there is one form of relationship that could have expanded journalism's legitimate role and strengthened its dialogue with society, yet remains largely avoided: external public accountability.

For instance, organizations such as ACRIMED (Action–Critique–Médias), founded in France in 1996, and the Syndicat de la Presse Indépendante d'Information en Ligne (SPIIL – Union of Independent Online News Publishers), established in 2009, highlight the importance of timely organization and collective action in the media sector.

Unfortunately, there is no comparable structure in Turkey that can play a meaningful role in the public sphere. While SPIIL undertakes the mission of defending the rights of online journalists, ACRIMED functions not only as a consultative partner within the media sector but also as a platform that, together with the public, explores the transformation of media and its ethical dimensions, conducting interviews with experts and publishing valuable analytical works

.
For example, the Media and News Education Association (EMI), founded in 2010 by AFP staff members together with a former Reuters journalist, launched the "Between the Lines" training program. This initiative brings together citizens and around 270 volunteer journalists from major French media outlets — including Le Monde, Télérama, Courrier International, La Vie, and Le HuffPost — through participatory workshops.

At the same time, strengthening communication between the media and society also requires journalists who specialize in media reporting to organize among themselves, beyond being represented within a general union or association. A good example is the Association des Journalistes Médias (AJM – Association of Media Journalists), which has been critically examining media-focused journalism since 1989.

"In Turkey, digital media lacks legal safeguards. Building connections with readers, strengthening public accountability, and establishing independent organizations are vital."

Can news organizations acknowledge their mistakes publicly and sustain a culture of self-criticism?

Do transparent mechanisms exist — such as ombudsmen or media monitoring platforms — where readers can share their views and participate in decision-making processes?

Are journalists, civil society organizations, and citizens able to collaborate on joint platforms to discuss media ethics and public trust?

Digital Media Literacy in Turkey

Dr. Necdet İpekyüz
Member of RTÜK

Digital media literacy is a shared responsibility not only for individuals but also for institutions. In Turkey, a comprehensive and rights-based approach to this issue has yet to be established at the policy or curriculum level.

In particular, the continued treatment of media literacy solely within the framework of traditional media is insufficient to address the challenges brought by digitalization — such as information pollution, algorithmic manipulation, hate speech, and violations of privacy.
Media literacy today is no longer just the responsibility of individuals; it is a collective duty shared by state institutions, the education system, civil society, and the media itself.

Unfortunately, RTÜK's approach to media literacy remains far from one that embraces this responsibility or prioritizes pluralistic participation.T he media literacy projects implemented to date have largely been state-driven, supervisory, and top-down in nature — aiming to raise compliant individuals rather than fostering citizens with critical thinking skills.

For this reason, the importance of independent initiatives that place media literacy on democratic, critical, and participatory foundations, rather than limiting it to mere regulation, is growing by the day.

In this regard, the Digital Media Literacy Guide puts forward the following three key recommendations:

> **"Media literacy policies in Turkey remain insufficient. For a more democratic and participatory approach, three steps are essential: the Ministry of Education should add practical courses; CSOs should raise awareness about the impact of algorithms; and a sustainable dialogue mechanism should be established among media, academia, civil society, and teacher networks."**

✓ *Are there practical media literacy courses in the Ministry of Education's curriculum that include digital rights, ethical content creation, and algorithm awareness?*

✓ *Do CSOs and local governments organize public awareness campaigns on fake news, hate speech, and algorithmic manipulation?*

✓ *Does RTÜK maintain a data-driven and continuous advisory mechanism among the media, academia, teacher networks, and civil society?*

Hate Speech in Times of Crisis: The February 6, 2023 Earthquakes

Elif Erol
Hrant Dink Foundation

The spread of digital technologies, the deepening of social polarization, the growing pressure of authoritarian regimes, and the role of algorithms have all contributed to making hate speech, discriminatory discourse, and disinformation more visible and widespread in digital spaces.

For this reason, digital media literacy has become critically important — not only for evaluating information but also for understanding its potential social consequences.

While hate speech is often shaped by political agendas and the international context, factors such as commemorations, wars, and politicians' statements can also directly influence its prevalence and intensity.

Since 2009, the Hrant Dink Foundation has been monitoring hate speech and discriminatory discourse in the print media and since 2022, also on social media. These studies are based on what the Foundation defines as the cycle of discrimination, which explains how historical narratives, the cultural context, the political climate, and current developments provide fertile ground for the formation of stereotypes and prejudices. These, in turn, manifest in behaviors that sustain discrimination, gradually leading to systematic inequality, and at times escalating into violence, thus reproducing the cycle itself.

Hate speech and discriminatory discourse are both fueled by this cycle and take different forms depending on the context in which they emerge. For this reason, digital media literacy plays a crucial role in making this cycle visible and preventing its reproduction.

In this context, we observe that disinformation and hate speech increase significantly during times of crisis. One of the main reasons for this is the deliberate circulation of false information, which weakens the flow of reliable news. During such periods, the direct impact of harmful discourse becomes more severe, while existing inequalities become more visible for certain groups.

The earthquakes of February 6, 2023, centered in Kahramanmaraş, affected a vast region across 11 provinces of Turkey, home to around 14 million people, causing massive destruction and loss of life. This nationwide crisis also became a period in which hate speech and disinformation were intensely observed.

Immediately after the earthquakes, bandwidth throttling and internet restrictions were imposed. These measures not only violated the public's right to access information and hindered access to reliable news, but also disrupted search and rescue efforts in the affected areas. Moreover, the restrictions severely limited the flow of information from the region to the outside world.

Following these restrictions, disinformation targeting migrants and refugees in the region spread rapidly across digital platforms. As a result, these groups became the primary targets of hate speech and discrimination. Refugees were stigmatized through the association of guilt with identity, and their rights, freedoms, and visibility were problematized.

Similarly, LGBTI+s in the affected areas faced various barriers to accessing shelter and healthcare services, while Romani communities experienced difficulties in obtaining official aid. On an intersectional level, groups such as LGBTI+ refugees were exposed to the compounded effects of multiple layers of discrimination, facing these injustices even more acutely.

After the earthquake, media and digital discourse largely failed to represent non-Muslim minorities living in the affected regions. This absence prevented the public from recognizing how the devastation impacted different identities.

In this context, digital media literacy is crucial not only for identifying false or incomplete information, but also for understanding who is represented, who is excluded, and how these representations generate gaps and distortions in knowledge. It also helps us grasp how the narratives produced in digital spaces can translate into concrete threats in real life. Such awareness is essential to prevent the further deepening of social polarization.

There are also positive examples that foreground inclusivity and pluralism by amplifying the voices of non-Muslim minorities. The Nehna platform, for instance, makes visible the culture, language, and history of the Orthodox community in and around Antakya. Similarly, the series "Faith Among the Ruins" by Marta Sömek, published in Agos newspaper, documents—two years after the earthquake—the destruction faced by Christian and Jewish places of worship in the region and the struggles of these communities to preserve their cultural heritage.

Digital media literacy enables us to recognize gaps in representation, identify marginalized identities, contribute to inclusivity, and combat discriminatory language and disinformation. However, it should not be understood merely as an individual skill. It must also be approached through structural dimensions — such as ensuring equal access to resources, making diverse voices visible in the public sphere, strengthening reliable information channels, and supporting democratic values.

When it comes to hate speech and discrimination, there is a clear continuity between digital and physical spaces. Therefore, to ensure that the human rights perspective remains central in efforts to combat discrimination, it is crucial to regard digital media literacy as a complementary tool within this broader approach.

For Media Professionals:

- Frame news stories using inclusive language, avoiding narratives that associate crime with identity.

For Civil Society Organizations:

- Create space for people to tell their own stories and make the experiences of those facing discrimination visible without victimization.

For Academics/Educators:

- Integrate a rights-based perspective and a focus on coexistence into curricula and teaching practices.

"Digital media literacy is critically important for recognizing who is being excluded and for strengthening inclusivity."

✓ *In crisis reporting, whose voices are being heard — and who is left out?*

✓ *Do we evaluate not only the accuracy of the information shared but also the discriminatory or exclusionary impact of the discourse?*

✓ *Do we frame news and narratives in ways that avoid assigning blame based on identity and instead foster solidarity and coexistence?*

The Transformation of Truth, the Spread of Lies, and the Persistence of Anti-LGBTI+ Sentiment

Yıldız Tar
KAOS GL

"But if truth is so powerful, how was it possible for fascists to imagine that Jews could destroy it?"

This question, posed by Federico Finchelstein in his book A Brief History of Fascist Lies, serves as a crucial point of departure for understanding fascism's contradictory relationship with truth. In fascist imagination, truth is seen as both omnipotent and fragile enough to be annihilated. This paradox remains instructive for grasping the logic behind what we now call systematic disinformation campaigns.

As Finchelstein points out, populism can be understood as fascism adapted to democracy. The populist political waves we witness today — early examples in Turkey and Russia, and more striking manifestations in the United States, Hungary, and Brazil — echo the same mechanisms of truth inversion employed during the Nazi era.

Many intellectuals writing about the so-called "post-truth era" fail to adequately consider how these mechanisms fuel the global anti-LGBTI+ movement. Yet, one of the founding myths of Nazi fascism was precisely its hostility toward homosexuality. In 1930s Germany, homosexuality was constructed as both a "deviation from nature" and a threat to social order and national security.

Under the leadership of Magnus Hirschfeld, the Institute for Sexual Science was established in Germany, only to be raided by the Nazis, who destroyed its archives and research materials. Paragraph 175 of the German Penal Code was further tightened, homosexuals were stigmatized, and many were sent to concentration camps. This demonization became an integral part of the imagined ideal of the "superior German nation."

Similar examples emerged during the Cold War period across different countries. In the United States, homosexuals were declared a national security threat and dismissed from their jobs; in the Soviet Union, homosexuality was labeled a "bourgeois degeneration" and punished accordingly. In both contexts, LGBTI+ people were perceived as an "international threat." Yet the Stonewall Uprising marked the end of this repressive era and laid the groundwork for a new phase of resistance and activism.

Today, we are witnessing the revival of these historical narratives. Some populist leaders portray LGBTI+s as part of a "global project." It is possible to trace direct continuities between the demonizing rhetoric of the Nazi period and contemporary "anti-gender" or "degendering" conspiracy narratives, which recycle old tropes of fear and control under new guises.

The Role of Disinformation

Disinformation has become a powerful mechanism that disproportionately affects LGBTI+s. Those who already face discrimination in daily life become even more vulnerable through orchestrated disinformation campaigns. This process involves not only the circulation of false information, but also the distortion of truth to reshape public perception and reinforce prejudice.

In the case of Turkey, anti-LGBTI+ discourse carries both historical roots and contemporary manifestations. In the early Republican period, fabricated news stories about the so-called "homosexual threat" appeared in the press, embedding stigmatizing narratives that persist in various forms to this day.

After the 1980 military coup, trans women in particular were subjected to systematic state repression. In the 1990s, the phrase "travesti terror" entered public discourse, criminalizing and stigmatizing LGBTI+s.

Since the 2000s, anti-LGBTI+ rhetoric and policies in Turkey have become increasingly institutionalized. Event bans, proposed legislation, and campaigns such as "The Year of the Family" have framed LGBTI+ existence as a matter of moral and cultural debate. During this period, public discourse began simultaneously emphasizing so-called "national and moral values" while portraying LGBTI+s as a threat to those very values.

After 2015, Pride March bans, restrictions on public events, and growing pressure on civil society have significantly narrowed the spaces for LGBTI+ expression and organization, marking a period of intensified marginalization and control.

Digital Violence and the Role of Media

Today, digital media environments have become one of the most powerful tools of disinformation. According to Kaos GL's research, the vast majority of LGBTI+s are regularly exposed to online violence. Forms of abuse such as insults, threats, blackmail, harassment, and doxxing (exposure of personal information) often escalate into offline violence or judicial harassment.

This phenomenon is not limited to anonymous internet users; politicians, media figures, and even social circles can become part of this chain of abuse. According to Kaos GL's 2023 media report, approximately 69% of print media coverage represented LGBTI+s in negative or stigmatizing ways. Such discourse restricts their visibility as subjects within the media, reducing them instead to objects of controversy and moral panic.

The "Conversion Therapy" Lie

Another dimension of disinformation is the claim that LGBTI+ identities are an illness. Practices known as "conversion" or "reparative therapy" have no scientific basis and are recognized by international organizations as a form of torture. Despite this, these practices are still at times presented as legitimate, causing severe psychological harm, especially to young people.

In Turkey, professional institutions in the fields of psychology and psychiatry issued a joint statement in 2015, condemning such practices and emphasizing that they are scientifically and ethically unacceptable.

Conclusion: Making Space for Truth

Disinformation targeting LGBTI+ people is not merely about spreading false information. Such campaigns deepen polarization, narrow the space for rights and freedoms, and undermine the possibility of a more equal society.

From Nazi Germany to contemporary Turkey, this trajectory shows that disinformation is not merely about manipulating information — it is about reconstructing social perception and seizing control of truth.

Yıldız Tar reveals how hate speech against LGBTI+ people has been institutionalized through media and politics and reinforced by forms of digital violence. Tar also underscores the media's responsibility to create space for truth, especially in an environment where pseudo-scientific practices like "conversion therapy" continue to be legitimized.

"Disinformation targeting LGBTI+ people is not merely about false information. These campaigns intensify polarization, shrink the space for rights and freedoms, and undermine the possibility of a more equal society."

In news coverage, do we represent LGBTI+s not as a "threat" or "topic of debate," but as equal subjects of social life?

Are unscientific claims being reproduced — or do we avoid legitimizing practices such as "conversion therapy" and pathologizing language?

Can we develop a media discourse that stands with solidarity, not hatred, making visible the struggles and contributions of LGBTI+ people?

Recommendations for Inclusive and Creative Digital Media Literacy

Prof. Dr. Nazan Haydari

TA gender-sensitive, inclusive, and intersectional approach to digital media literacy enhances the transformative potential of learning processes.

Creating space for collective production enables young people to see themselves as active subjects. Methods such as workshops, digital storytelling, and participatory curatorship serve as empowering tools in this process.

Art-based advocacy methods can be especially transformative for organizations working with youth. Visual storytelling, sound, and digital collage offer pluralistic platforms for sharing diverse experiences and identities.

Accessibility is a core element of inclusivity. Alternative tools should be provided for people with disabilities or different communication preferences — for instance, using text instead of video or visual narratives instead of audio.

Digital media literacy supported by face-to-face interaction and shared experiences creates deeper and more lasting learning environments.

The quality of participation is just as important as its quantity. Projects should regularly assess not only who participates and why, but also who remains silent or excluded.

Recognizing that participants possess different skills and learning paces is essential in digital projects. Therefore, in addition to group meetings, individual follow-up and support processes should be allocated sufficient time and resources.

Ethics and awareness of representation must be integral components of digital media literacy education. Alongside technical knowledge, topics such as consent, copyright, and a culture of giving and receiving feedback should also be addressed.

> **"An inclusive, intersectional approach to digital media literacy that centers gender enhances the transformative impact of learning processes."**

✓ *Are we regularly assessing who gets to speak — and who remains silent or excluded?*

✓ *Is creativity and collaborative production being encouraged?*

✓ *Are accessible tools provided for individuals with different communication preferences, and is a culture of consent, authorship, and feedback being fostered?*

Conclusion and Shared Call

A rights-based approach, critical thinking, inclusivity, and active citizenship are the cornerstones of a democratic and just future in the digital age.

Digital media literacy is not merely an individual skill; it is part of our shared responsibility in building that democratic future. Everyone's contribution is essential for fostering social solidarity and informed participation.

The aim of this guide is to offer ideas for developing participatory approaches in digital spaces, to share responsibility among rights advocates, journalists, educators, civil society actors, and public institutions, and to strengthen democratic culture through collaboration.

Digital Media Literacy Article Series

This series was published on bianet.org in Turkish and English, every two weeks between June and September, 2025

Asst. Prof. Tirşe Erbaysal Filibeli / Algorithmic bias: Platform capitalism, data and reality

Community-based verification is a new verification model adopted by digital platforms that relies on user contributions rather than professional fact-checkers.

Whose side are algorithms on?

Whether or not content is visible on social media platforms is determined by economic criteria such as user engagement, click-through rate, and time spent on the platform. However, these criteria are not only technical; they are also shaped by cultural and ideological values.

For example, changes made to Google's News and Discover algorithms reduced visitor traffic to independent news sites in Turkey by 70–90%. This directly affected advertising revenues, and Gazete Duvar was forced to cease operations on March 12, 2025, due to visitor loss. Google's opaque algorithm updates not only hinder independent media's revenue but also obstruct the public's access to quality news — that is, the truth (Bianet, 2025; T24, 2025).

Seeking the truth is a public responsibility!

In an age where reality is determined by algorithms, it is inevitable that users will demand more transparent, fairer, and more accountable digital ecosystems. Fact-checking is not just a technical process; it is the foundation of digital democracy. Algorithms are not neutral; they are ideological structures that shape reality through data selection.

Therefore, digital media literacy must be complemented by algorithmic literacy; users must be made aware not only of content but also of the structures of content production and distribution. In the digital age, seeking the truth is a public responsibility!

Koray Kaplıca / How to approach 'accurate' Information in the digital age

While critical media literacy places the individual's relationship with information on a questioning and contextual basis, the practice that takes this competence a step further is fact-checking. Fact-checking is a practice that dates back to the early 20th century. Initially, it was an internal audit process carried out by editorial staff who checked information such as names, dates, and statistics in news articles before publication. In the late 1990s in the US, fact-checking began to transition from an editorial process to a public oversight tool with the emergence of independent initiatives that examined candidates' statements during election campaigns. With the rise of social media in the 2010s, this field expanded further. Fact-checking platforms increased in number and spread to different regions. With technology companies such as Meta and Google collaborating with these organizations to combat misinformation, fact-checking evolved into an integrated structure on digital platforms.

Visual and video manipulations

These manipulations take various forms. For example, an old video may be shared as if it were new; an image taken in a different country may be presented with altered location and time information. Some videos are cut and taken out of context, or sped up or slowed down to convey a new meaning. Images can be altered using Photoshop-like editing tools; even scenes that never existed can be created using artificial intelligence. Deepfake technologies can be used to create fake speeches by famous people.

Various tools and methods can be used to verify such misinformation. Reverse image search (Google Lens, Yandex Images, TinEye, etc.) is an effective method for determining where images have been published before. For videos, searches can be conducted using frame extraction. During the verification process, it is important to find the original source of the video, analyze whether the audio is genuine, and check the sharing dates. Details in the image, including signs, weather, text, clothing, and facial expressions, provide important clues about the context of the content. AI-generated content is becoming increasingly convincing, so it requires extra attention. In such content, small but telling details such as facial asymmetry, lack of blinking, light-shadow imbalances, artificial gazes, or the number of fingers can indicate that the content is fake.

Nihan Güneli / Journalists' rights and obligations in digital media

Freedom of expression, the right to privacy, and the right to access information, all guaranteed by the Constitution, have taken on new dimensions in the digital environment.

Freedom of expression, regulated under Article 26 of the Constitution, encompasses individuals' right to share their thoughts on online platforms without fear of censorship or punishment in the digital environment. This right is also guaranteed internationally under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The right to privacy of private life, regulated under Article 20 of the Constitution, manifests itself in the digital media environment through privacy regulations and personal data protection.

These rights are fundamental both to the professional practice of journalism and to the sustainability of a democratic society. In the digital sphere, journalists take on new responsibilities — not only in exercising their freedom of expression but also in ensuring privacy and digital security. In particular, the increasing prevalence of constant surveillance and data collection practices poses significant risks to journalistic independence.

Press freedom and digital censorship mechanisms

Conceptually, press freedom can be defined as the ability of media organizations to carry out their news-gathering, processing, and dissemination activities independently from state intervention, commercial pressures, and social censorship attempts.

Press freedom, guaranteed in national and international legal texts, particularly Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights and Article 28 of the Constitution, is regulated by Press Law No. 5187, which provides the necessary legal framework for the press to fulfill its democratic function by fundamentally regulating freedom of thought and opinion through the press and the right to receive and disseminate news.

Press freedom is certainly not an unlimited right; it may be subject to certain limitations within the framework of the requirements of democratic social order. In this regard, pursuant to Article 3 of the Press Law, it may be limited "for the protection of others' reputation and rights, public health and morals, national security, public order, public safety and territorial integrity, prevention of disclosure of state secrets or commission of crimes, and ensuring the authority and impartiality of the judiciary."

The widespread adoption of digital media platforms today has created the need to redefine the concept of press freedom. Furthermore, efforts to adapt to the digital age have also given rise to the need to combat disinformation. With the amendments made by Law No. 7418 in 2022, regulations added to the Press Law began evaluating internet journalism as "periodical publication" alongside traditional media organizations, and measures against disinformation were regulated with the crime of "publicly disseminating misleading information" through Article 217/A added to the Turkish Penal Code. This regulation undoubtedly also covers publications made in the digital environment.

Diyar Saraçoğlu / Transcending the boundaries of media: Appropriation of collective knowledge, transformation of labor and alternative futures

The concept of the "Censorship-Industrial Complex," which has gained popularity in recent years, is used to describe this control architecture, i.e., the collaboration between state institutions and technology companies (Shellenberger, 2023; ADF International, 2024). However, this concept risks obscuring the structural dynamics at the root of the problem by framing censorship as a deviation from democratic functioning. On the other hand, when we view it not as an anomaly but as a necessary mechanism that (digital) capitalism resorts to in order to manage its own contradictions and maintain the conditions for capital accumulation, the state emerges as an actor that protects the interests of the ruling class and regulates the digital sphere in favor of capital. Therefore, the movements that are emerging against this multi-layered domination and are based on solidarity are opening the door to a more just future by defending not only freedom of expression but also labor and the commons.

Toward a common future

The resistance movements emerging against the integrated system formed by the Censorship-Industrial Complex and its economic foundations must not be isolated reactions but rather complementary parts of a counter-strategy. These movements challenge the system's three pillars simultaneously: the exploitation of labor, the appropriation of knowledge, and infrastructural dependency. The Alphabet Workers Union directly intervenes against exploitation by challenging the artificial divisions that fragment and devalue labor at the heart of tech giants. The CARE Principles and the practices of the Māori community fundamentally undermine the logic of appropriation by returning ownership of collective knowledge (data) produced by labor back to the communities that produce it. Models such as media cooperatives like The Bristol Cable and federated networks hold the potential to concretize infrastructural autonomy.

The reclamation of labor, data, and tools lays the groundwork for establishing holistic autonomy in the digital realm. These approaches not only resist the current system but also offer a concrete vision for the democratic infrastructures of the future. The models presented are not merely "more ethical" alternatives to profit- and manipulation-oriented platforms, but structures that fundamentally transform ownership, management, and the logic of "value." Their primary goal is not to commodify user data, but to preserve and develop community knowledge as a shared asset.

In this context, the concept of digital media literacy also undergoes a transformation. It is no longer a passive defense mechanism where individuals protect themselves from disinformation; instead, it becomes a constructive skill that involves active participation in the construction and management of newly established, collectively based, and democratically managed infrastructures. The real transformation depends not so much on a technological solution as on the spread of the aforementioned social and organizational innovations. The potential to reclaim collective knowledge and labor not for the benefit of a handful of actors but for the empowerment of everyone lies in these new and autonomous infrastructures, where the seeds of resistance are sprouting.

Öyküm Hüma Keskin / Critical digital literacy: A key competency in combating hate speech and disinformation

Disinformation does not float around in a vacuum; it often triggers emotions, leading to more dangerous consequences. It is possible to think of this process as a mechanism.

It all starts with a claim being put forward. For example, the claim that "Syrians enter universities without exams." This may seem like ordinary misinformation on social media; however, the potential for harmful information to cause damage is greater than we think.

In the second step, this claim merges with the feelings of everyday injustice in our lives. When people believe that another group is entering university "privileged," while their own children have worked hard for years, it ceases to be just "information" and gives way to powerful emotions like anger.

What are the core skills?

There are many frameworks that describe the skills involved in critical digital literacy. The framework outlined by Juliet Hinrichsen and Antony Coombs from the University of Greenwich consists of five stages and depicts an established literacy model supported by a critical perspective:

1) Decoding

Decoding can be summarized as the ability to see the invisible mechanisms and rules of the digital world. For example, if we constantly see similar content on social media, continuing to consume it knowing that this is not a coincidence but the result of algorithms is an effective outcome of decoding.

2) Meaning making

Every piece of digital content we encounter gains meaning through our experiences, knowledge, and biases. Therefore, interpretation involves questioning the context, purpose, and emotional impact of digital content. For instance, when encountering a hateful post targeting a group, we must remember that it reinforces biases and exclusionary attitudes.

3) Analyzing

To make conscious choices in the digital environment, we need to be aware of the creator behind the content, that is, the author's or source's aesthetic, ethical, and critical choices.

For example, even if the shared image is accurate, we need to keep in mind that it may have a manipulative context. Analysis requires thinking by asking questions such as, "Who produced this, for what purpose did they put it into circulation, and who could it harm?"

4) Persona

This dimension is about consciously managing our presence in the digital world.

In the online world, information does not circulate alone, but together with our identities. When we comment or share, we are actually building our own digital persona. For example, when we see a hateful comment directed at an athlete, staying silent is a choice; so is politely objecting or offering an alternative voice.

5) Using

The final step points to the ability to use digital tools not only for consumption but also for production and democratic participation. When we see someone we know sharing misinformation, explaining it calmly is a practical application of this skill. Creating a healthier digital environment for both ourselves and the community we are part of requires active participation.

Esra Ercan Bilgiç / Children in the age of artificial intelligence: How can they benefit from opportunities while being protected from risks?

Children growing up in the digital age are faced with screens, applications, and written, visual, and audio media content in every area of their lives. While this offers them unlimited opportunities for learning and entertainment, it also brings with it significant threats such as false information, advertisement pressure, and online risks. To ensure children become critical, conscious, strong, and resilient individuals in the face of media, it is necessary to equip them with digital media literacy skills, enabling them to benefit from opportunities while protecting them from risks.

REMEDIS project: Implications for children

The European Union-supported REMEDIS project also asks how children can become stronger and more informed individuals in the digital world. This international initiative, titled Rethinking Media Literacy and Digital Skills, examines the impact of media literacy and digital skills training across different age and social groups. Carried out in collaboration with seven academic partners and fourteen civil society organizations, the project goes beyond being merely an academic study; it serves as a guiding manual for various actors, from educators to policymakers (REMEDIS Toolkit, 2025)

Literacy in the age of algorithms, advertising, and artificial intelligence

Today, media is shaped not only by content, but also by the invisible systems that deliver that content to us. Algorithms determine what appears on children's screens, capturing their attention with calculative elements. Advertising technologies target children with personalized messages, while artificial intelligence is heavily used in the production of content aimed at children. The increase in AI-generated content on YouTube has led to the emergence of concepts such as identifying factual errors or inappropriate messages in this content (Parents, 2025).

The role of families

Of course, limiting digital media literacy education to schools and classrooms is not enough. As Common Sense Education suggests, families are also expected to take an active role in their children's media experiences. The role of the mediator parent or caregiver in the home environment is important here. Discussing the news with children, questioning the purpose behind an advertisement they see, keeping the question "is it real or not?" open before sharing, questioning gender roles while watching movies together, drawing attention to ideological perspectives in short videos and, at times, hate speech spreading on social media platforms are among the effective practices that can be implemented in the home environment. Furthermore, showing children how to obtain information from different sources and helping them recognize clickbait and biases significantly strengthens their critical thinking skills (Common Sense Education, 2020). In this way, media literacy goes beyond being a classroom topic and becomes a natural part of daily family conversations.

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QR kodu okutarak IPS İletişim Vakfı/bianet'in paydaşlarından olduğu **Bizim Medyamız (Our Media)** projesi kapsamında hazırlanan **Medya Okuryazarlığı Testi'**ne ulaşabilirsiniz.