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ECIL 2017. Celebrating difference, while being mindful of what we love: conference report from the fifth European Conference on Information Literacy

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The fifth [European Conference on Information Literacy \(ECIL\)](#) was held in St Malo in Brittany, France from 18–21st September 2017. ECIL has developed quite a reputation for holding their conference in fortified historic cities (previous conferences have been in Istanbul, Dubrovnik, Tallinn and Prague) and I feel incredibly privileged to have attended them all. The conference this year had the theme of workplace information literacy and I was one of a relatively small group of people from the UK who attended. The sheer breadth of delegates from around the world each year highlights to me how global the information literacy community is and how much scope there is for collaboration, sharing research insights and making new connections in the field.

ECIL is one of my favourite conferences, given its focus on all forms of information, digital and related literacies in formal education and beyond. It is where I have met some fantastic practitioners and researchers and it has inspired me to develop my own interests in new, exciting areas. It was four years ago at ECIL in Dubrovnik that I learnt of the copyright literacy survey, at the time undertaken in just four countries in Europe. It led me to not only run the survey in the UK, but to develop an ongoing collaboration with Chris Morrison, and to launch the [Copyright Literacy](#) movement. I noted this year a growing interest in data literacy and an international survey has been launched on this topic, focusing on the skills and knowledge of researchers and academic staff.

For me it was a treat to have an entire afternoon strand of this year's conference dedicated to copyright literacy. Not only did I get to present a paper on [creative and collaborative approaches to copyright literacy](#) (Morrison & Secker, 2017), based on my latest research with Chris, but I chaired an international panel and the afternoon set of papers where researchers from around the world shared insights into copyright and legal education in their country. The [international copyright literacy panel](#) discussion at ECIL (Secker et al., 2017), was partly a repeat of the opening panel I chaired at an IFLA off-site meeting in August on [Models for Copyright Education in Information Literacy Programs](#). However, this time there were representatives from several more countries joining the panel including Hungary, Spain and Bulgaria to join Turkey, Romania, Norway, Sweden and the UK. The day was rather like an all-you-can-eat buffet of copyright literacy for me, and I enjoyed it immensely!

I attended a whole range of presentations this year including two on using mindfulness and contemplative pedagogy in information literacy teaching. These two topics were both really quite significant to me, as I've recently started practising mindfulness and had felt instinctively it had an application and overlap with IL. 'The tortoise or the hare: Undergraduates, IL and the slow movement' by Marietta Frank, Kimberly Bailey and Catherine Baldwin, from the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford was a great introduction to the topic of mindful IL. Meanwhile Katia Karadjova from Humboldt University spoke of the 'brain booth' they had introduced in the library, partly to promote mindfulness and focus for students who were constantly distracted and trying to multi-task. Contemplative pedagogy was an area of research and practice a colleague has introduced me to recently. And again I felt immediately it had a relationship to IL, so in both cases it was great to hear from people who have also made those links. I also met up with colleagues, including Diane Mizrahi from the University of California in Los Angeles who has continued her

fascinating study into students' preferences for formats for academic reading. The findings continue to suggest that students prefer print over electronic.

I enjoyed three fantastic keynotes from Bonnie Chuek, Drew Whitworth and Stephane Goldstein. Stephane's keynote was particularly thought provoking considering information literacy and the future of work, in particular in relation to the 'gig economy' with the rise of companies such as Uber, Air BnB and Deliveroo to name but a few. The rather rosy view of the future where people can work flexibly and sell their talents globally was contrasted with an economy that can easily exploit the vulnerable and in fact lead to greater social divides. Stephane was not apologising for being political – IL is political he told us, but he wanted to ask how IL might address the threats to the future of work. It's not just about opportunities, creativity and innovation, there are very real threats: of inequality, worker exploitation and the loss of workplace rights. He ended by asking us to consider what new research perspectives there are for IL and what solutions IL might offer us in the future.

Drew, as ever challenged us and also considered the political dimension of IL in his keynote entitled 'Lessons from the Borg cube: IL and the knowledge of difference'. Starting with the example of Brexit he spoke about today's world of fake news, where people are thriving on sharing misinformation. He went on to show us a clip from Star Trek, using the idea of the Borg, who just want to assimilate the cultures they find, absorb them, and how this is not what it means to learn. He urged us, as researchers and practitioners, to be sensitive to 'difference' and IL is about knowing the difference, not simply a love of difference.

I was delighted to attend the panel discussion led by JIL's editor, Emma Coonan, with two of the editors from the US journal *Communications in Information Literacy (CIL)* Bob Schneider and Chris Hollister. They looked at trends in publishing in the field of information literacy, comparing the two journals which both celebrated their 10-year anniversary this year. Emma's analysis of JIL looked at comparing the journal at three points in its history, to see who was publishing, the countries they came from and the themes that have been discussed. Bob and Chris gave a similar overview of their journal, highlighting how workplace IL had not been a theme in CIL to date, but that critical IL was a growing area of interest. Emma talked about the need to build confidence in research methods – so people will go beyond running surveys – and also to underpin what they are doing with theory. She also talked about JIL's goal to help to develop authors' writing abilities through a supportive peer review process. And both journals are keen to make it transparent about how to get published.

ECIL is a fabulous international community and St Malo was a wonderful city in which to network with old friends and meet some new ones too. I managed to walk the city walls and enjoy bracing winds and stunning views along the seafront. I sampled delicious caramel-flavoured desserts and refreshing local cider. I was disappointed this year to miss the conference gala dinner which is always a highlight, but I had teaching commitments which meant I needed to be back in London. However, I did get to enjoy some lovely meals out, there was no shortage of seafood in this part of France, and an interesting approach to salads, where I swear I found dried mealworms in one! However, in the words of Drew Whitworth, I celebrated the differences I found this year at ECIL, I was mindful to choose my sessions carefully, and also keen not to attend the sessions on topics I love (copyright literacy) but to be open to new opportunities. Thank you to Serap, Sonja and Joumana the conference organisers for inspiring me for another year and I do hope I can get to [ECIL 2018](#) in Oulu, Finland. The call for papers is out!

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