After decades of development, research and practice of media literacy education, experts are still struggling to define what Media and Information Literacy (MIL) really is. According to the 2-day debate at the Hong Kong Conference, jointly organised by the School of Communication, Hong Kong Baptist University and Institute of Communication Studies, Communication University of China – it seems that the field of MIL is located at the crossroad of many academic disciplines and it possesses a multidisciplinary characteristic. The participants agreed that for both, research and practice, media literacy is not restricted to be carried out in a single discipline.

The conference in Hong Kong brought together international scholars and educators to discuss how various disciplines are contributing to the development of media literacy and to put forward new ideas and practice models. Experts from China, the USA, the UK and Russia explored how young people deal with digital media, including their social media lives, cultivation of values, media consumption, news and information searching, creative media production, online shopping, healthy eating, leisure, work and study, social participation, etc.
Prof. Ellen Seiter from the University of Southern California in the USA argued for dangers of screen addiction via neuroscience, while Prof. Yanqiu Zhang, Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Journalism and Communication, Communication University of China, pointed out key issues of New Media Literacy in China and how they correlate with specifics of the country’s culture and social environment. Prof. Andrew Burn from the Institute of Education, University College London, UK, shared his experience in teaching Media Literacy in arts.

No matter what the definition and the use of media literacy is, it attracts scholars and educators from communication studies, education, journalism, cultural studies, health communication, language, arts, new media, etc. to work in this field and establish diversified development.

Sharing the Media Diversity Institute (MDI) definition and the experience, Executive Director Milica Pesic stressed that for practitioners such as MDI ‘media literacy is primarily implicated in the practice of citizenship’. ‘We see MIL as a set of skills needed by citizens to fully and competently participate in public debates on the issues relevant to their societies’. ‘We see MIL as the way to help citizens make responsible choices by analysing, understanding and evaluating the messages received through media. Only then they can take social actions they can benefit from’, said Pesic.