Evaluation Media Investigation Lab

Critically Navigating the Digital Information Ecosystem

October 2026

Anke Vellenga & Deike Schulz



NHL STENDEN hogeschool

Table of Contents

Foreword 2
Summary 3
1 The Media Investigation Lab: Context and Pilot Phase 4
2 Purpose, Research Questions and Research Approach 8
2.1 Purpose of the Evaluation 8
2.2 Research Questions 8
2.3 Research Approach 9
2.4 Data Sources 9
2.5 Analysis 10
2.6 Scope and Interpretation of the Findings 10
3 Results 11
3.1 News Consumption and the Digital Information Ecosystem 11
3.2 Changes in Digital Media Literacy 13
3.3 Learning in a Community 14
3.4 Most and Least Valued Components 15
3.5 Development Needs for the MIL 17
4 Conclusion and Reflection 18
5 Recommendations 20
6 Future Outlook 21
References 22

Foreword

This report presents the evaluation of the Media Investigation Lab (MIL), a learning community in which students, lecturers, researchers, and professionals collaborate on issues related to disinformation and digital media literacy. The report describes the experiences and outcomes of the pilot phase, which ran from September 2025 to April 2026, and provides insights for the further development of the initiative.

The purpose of this evaluation is to gain insight into the experiences, learning outcomes, and development needs of the participating students. The findings provide initial insights into how the MIL may contribute to the development of digital media literacy. They also provide directions for the further strengthening of the living lab.

This pilot would not have been possible without the commitment and involvement of all participants. We would especially like to thank the students who actively participated in the lab sessions, workshops, research activities, and evaluations. Their enthusiasm, curiosity, and critical mindset formed the foundation of the Media Investigation Lab. We also express our appreciation to the lecturers, researchers, and project team members of the Professorships Organisations and Social Media and Cybersafety for their dedication to the development and implementation of the pilot.

We would also like to thank our partners, the Media Innovation Campus (MICA), Bellingcat, Leeuwarder Courant, Omrop Fryslân, and guest speaker Christiaan Triebert of The New York Times, as well as our RUN-EU partners Universidad de Burgos and Howest University of Applied Sciences, for their valuable contributions and collaboration.

Our insights from this evaluation will contribute to the continued development of the Media Investigation Lab and to strengthening digital media literacy within higher education.

Anke Vellenga & Deike Schulz
Leeuwarden, October 2026

Summary

The Media Investigation Lab (MIL) was launched in September 2025 as an experimental learning community initiated by the Professorship Organisations and Social Media. It brings together students, lecturers, researchers, and professionals to collaborate on issues related to digital media literacy, such as identifying and assessing reliable online information, the responsible use of AI, and understanding online influence and algorithms.

The MIL was designed as a living lab and learning environment in which participants learn through inquiry, experimentation, and collective reflection. The lab incorporates methods from investigative journalism and Open Source Intelligence (OSINT). This approach builds on the pilot project De PIT (2022–2023), in which three regional learning communities worked on strengthening digital citizenship (Schulz et al., 2026).

The findings suggest that participation in the MIL may have contributed to a more critical and conscious approach to news, information, and social media. Students reported that they more frequently verify sources, compare multiple perspectives, and reflect more consciously on the influence of algorithms, framing, and AI within the digital information ecosystem.

In addition, the community-based nature of the MIL appears to play an important role in the learning process. Students emphasized the value of collective reflection, discussing societal issues, and learning from one another within a safe environment.

At the same time, the pilot highlights the need for further development in areas such as structure, role allocation, communication, curriculum integration, and the systematic measurement of learning outcomes. These findings provide important directions for the continued development of the MIL.

AI Use Statement

Generative AI was used in the preparation of this report to support the writing process, including language editing, text summarization, and content structuring. All research activities, data analyses, interpretation of findings, and conclusions were carried out by the authors. Any AI-generated content was reviewed, verified, and, where necessary, revised by the authors before being included in the final report.

1 The Media Investigation Lab: Context and Pilot Phase

The Media Investigation Lab (MIL) was developed by researchers from the Professorship Organisations and Social Media (OSM) in response to growing societal challenges related to disinformation, artificial intelligence (AI), algorithmic influence, and the reliability of online information.



Lecturers and students in the MIL

The MIL builds on the pilot project De PIT (2022–2023), in which three regional learning communities worked to strengthen digital citizenship (Schulz et al., 2026). Whereas De PIT focused primarily on digital citizenship and community building, the MIL places a stronger emphasis on digital media literacy and on developing the skills needed to investigate the digital information ecosystem[1].

The MIL was established as a living lab and learning environment in which students, lecturers, researchers, and professionals learn and experiment with digital media together. At its core is the development of digital media literacy. This is defined as the ability to critically find, analyse, evaluate, and create digital information and media, and to participate consciously and responsibly in digital environments and society.

The pilot

During its first academic year, the MIL took shape through a pilot programme. Prior to the start of the lab sessions, ten lecturers and

[1] The digital information ecosystem refers to the interconnected network of people, organisations, digital platforms, algorithms, technologies, practices, and information flows that shape how digital information is produced, distributed, encountered, interpreted, and used.

researchers from the Professorships OSM and Cybersafety received training from Bellingcat in internet investigations and Open Source Intelligence (OSINT). This training provided the substantive and methodological foundation for guiding students during the lab sessions.

Students from the NHL Stenden bachelor's programmes Creative Business and European Studies, as well as the master's programme Content & Media Strategy, participated in twenty lab sessions and workshops covering topics such as disinformation, fact-checking, open data, AI literacy, and ethics. In addition, students collaboratively developed an AI guideline and individually conducted an online investigation on a topic of their own choosing.

In total, 22 students participated in at least one lab session. A core group of approximately twelve students was actively involved in the MIL throughout the pilot phase. Participation was embedded within the educational programmes in various ways. Creative Business students received Open Data Points[2] for their participation, while Content & Media Strategy students were able to link their participation to an assignment within the module Personal & Professional Development. Several students also participated on a voluntary basis.

In addition to the regular lab sessions, two fact-checking marathons were organised in collaboration with the Professorship Cybersafety and the Media Innovation Campus (MICA) during national and municipal elections in the Netherlands[3]. These activities were open to a broader audience and attracted approximately 90 students in total from various educational programmes. Participants received a certificate of participation upon completion.

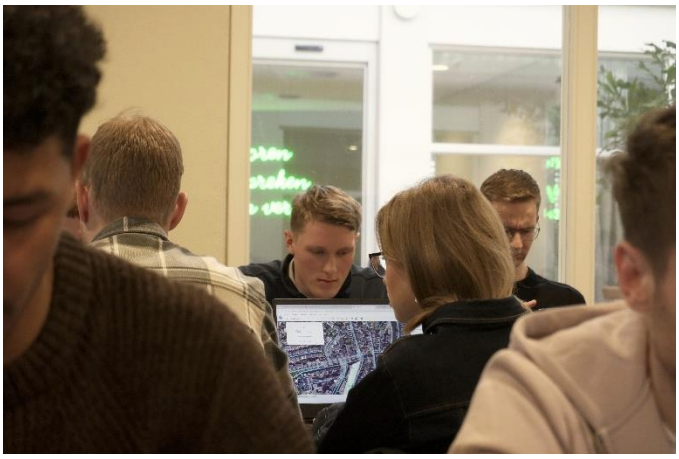
Furthermore, the MIL formed part of the international RUN-EU Short Advanced Programme (SAP) Democracy, Citizenship, and Emerging Challenges: European Values at Risk?, co-developed by Universidad de Burgos and Howest University of Applied Sciences. Within this programme, 37 students from seven European countries participated in educational activities focusing on democratic values, disinformation, AI, and media literacy.[4]

---

[2] ODP (Open Data Point): an extracurricular learning activity worth approximately 28 hours of study and professional development. ODPs allow students to demonstrate learning outcomes through portfolio evidence, feedback, and reflection as part of programmatic assessment.

[3] https://www.factcheckmarathon.nl/

[4] Democracy, Citizenship, and Emerging Challenges: European Values at risk? | SAP-DECIEMCH-01 | RUN-EU



Fact-Checking Marathon, Regional Dutch Elections 2026

Evaluating the pilot

This report evaluates the first pilot phase of the MIL. It examines to what extent, and in what ways, the MIL as a living lab and learning environment contributed to the development of students' digital media literacy. As the evaluation concerns the initial pilot phase, the study has an exploratory and developmental character. The findings provide insight into the outcomes and experiences of the pilot while also serving as input for the further development of the MIL.

In the 2026–2027 academic year, the MIL will continue and expand to additional educational programmes, including those at the Thorbecke Academy. This expansion will be accompanied by a research project, partially funded through a fellowship supported by Regieorgaan SIA (part of the Dutch Research Council (NWO)), to evaluate the MIL's contribution to students' digital media literacy and identify conditions for its successful implementation and scaling.

Media Investigation Lab

Tijdlijn · Timeline



Media Investigation Lab · NHL Stenden

2 Purpose, Research Questions and Research Approach

2.1 Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation is to gain insight into the experiences, learning outcomes, and development needs of students who participated in the first pilot phase of the MIL.

As the MIL is currently in its initial stage of development, the pilot evaluation was not designed as an impact assessment. Instead, the study has an exploratory and developmental character. The findings are intended to provide insight into the outcomes of the pilot and to identify opportunities for the further development of the programme, the learning environment, and student support.

2.2 Research Questions

The evaluation is guided by the following main research question:

How do students experience the Media Investigation Lab, and what learning outcomes and development needs emerge in relation to their digital media literacy?

This main research question is divided into three sub-questions:

1. What changes and learning outcomes do students report in their engagement with news, online information, and digital media?

2. How do students experience learning within the Media Investigation Lab as a community, and what meaning do they attribute to collaboration and knowledge exchange?

3. What insights and development needs emerge from the pilot for the further development of the MIL?

2.3 Research Approach

The pilot evaluation drew on a combination of quantitative and qualitative data sources. This mixed-methods approach made it possible to gain initial insights into participants' characteristics and expectations, while also exploring their experiences and learning outcomes in greater depth.

The quantitative data were collected through a benchmark survey administered at the start of the programme and through a small-scale midterm evaluation. Qualitative data formed the core of the evaluation and consisted of a focus group interview, evaluation forms, and individual reflection assignments. In addition, observations from MIL sessions and project documentation were used to contextualise the findings.

2.4 Data Sources

Benchmark survey

At the start of the programme, 19 participants completed a benchmark survey, of which 14 questionnaires were fully completed. The survey explored, among other topics, students' news consumption habits, their trust in different information sources, their use of social media, and their expectations of the MIL.

In addition, a small-scale interim evaluation was conducted halfway through the programme. Due to the limited response rate, these data were used solely as supplementary context for the interpretation of the other findings.

Qualitative data

The core of the evaluation consists of qualitative data. These data were collected through a focus group interview with five participants, eight evaluation forms completed by six Creative Business students, and individual reflection assignments on news consumption, media literacy, and current news events.

Together, these sources provide insight into students' experiences with the MIL, their engagement with news and digital information, and their perceived development throughout the programme.

Observations and project documentation

To complement the data collection, observations from twenty MIL sessions and project documentation were used. These sources were not systematically included in the qualitative analysis but provided additional

information about the implementation of the programme and the context in which students' experiences and learning outcomes emerged.

2.5 Analysis

The qualitative data were analysed thematically. The analysis examined various aspects of news consumption, media literacy, students' experiences with the MIL, and their development throughout the programme. More specifically, the analysis focused on:

- **News experiences and perceptions:** emotions related to news, news habits, trust in news, and the evaluation of reliable sources;
- **Behaviour and interaction:** discussing news, behavioural changes, and the ways in which students engage with different perspectives;
- **Learning outcomes and media literacy:** perceived changes, awareness of media literacy, newly acquired skills, and further learning needs;
- **Experiences with the MIL:** expectations, topics and skills perceived as valuable or less valuable, and ideas for the further development of the MIL;
- **Reflection and digital identity:** self-assessment, views on responsible digital citizenship, and experiences with social media, including both concerns and positive aspects of its use.

The quantitative survey data were used to describe the participants' starting situation. Given the limited size of the group and the absence of a representative sample, the findings are not intended for statistical generalisation.

2.6 Scope and Interpretation of the Findings

The findings of this evaluation should be considered indicative. The size and composition of the participant group, the limited response at certain measurement points, and the exploratory nature of the evaluation restrict the extent to which conclusions can be drawn about the effects of the MIL. The findings primarily provide insight into the experiences and perspectives of participating students, as well as potential learning outcomes and areas for further development.

The various data sources were used to obtain insights into the initial outcomes and development opportunities of the pilot from multiple perspectives. As such, the findings provide a foundation for further development and for the practice-oriented research that will be conducted in the next phase of the MIL.

3 Results

To gain insight into the experiences, learning outcomes, and development needs of students who participated in the pilot phase of the MIL, the following research question was formulated:

How do students experience the Media Investigation Lab, and what learning outcomes and development needs emerge in relation to their digital media literacy?

The findings show that students experience the MIL as a valuable learning environment that combines practice-oriented research, reflection, and collaboration. The main learning outcomes relate to critical news consumption, source verification, research skills, AI literacy, and awareness of algorithms and framing. In addition, the community-based nature of the MIL is perceived as an important added value.

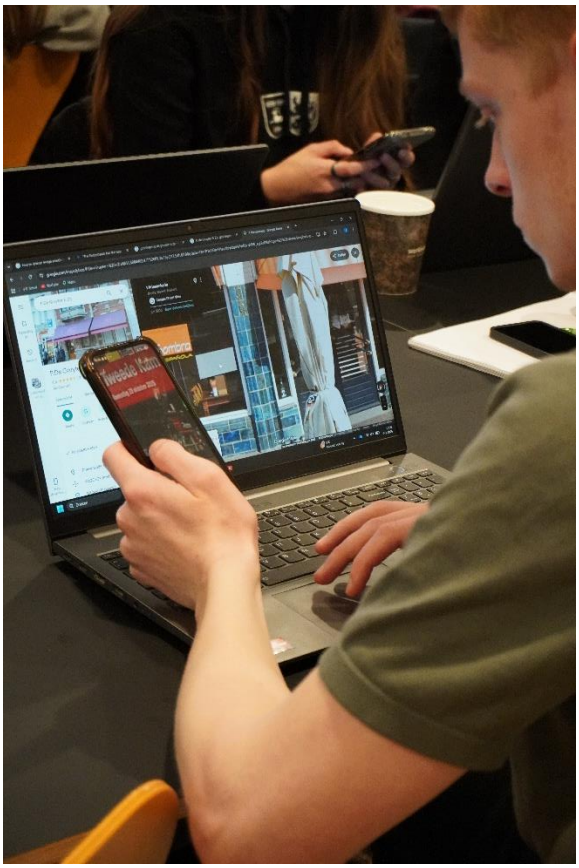
3.1 News Consumption and the Digital Information Ecosystem

Social media are an important source of news for many students. In particular, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube are mentioned as platforms through which students encounter news and current events. As a result, news is not always actively searched for but is frequently presented through personalised feeds. Through their participation in the MIL, students became more aware of the influence of algorithms as part of this process. For example, they recognised that their previous search and viewing behaviour partly determines which news stories and perspectives are shown to them. Reflecting on their news consumption, one student described it as “far too passive and strongly influenced by algorithms.” The risks of filter bubbles and one-sided information exposure were also frequently mentioned.

In addition to social media, students use traditional and professional news sources, including the Dutch public broadcaster NOS (and comparable news organisations in the home countries of international students) as well as online news outlets. These sources are generally perceived as more reliable than social media news accounts, influencers, and group chats. In the benchmark survey, online newspapers received higher average trust scores than social media news accounts and influencers. This finding is consistent

with previous studies among young people conducted by the Professorships Cybersafety and Organisations and Social Media.[5]

Students primarily associate trust with journalistic professionalism, neutrality, and the use of verifiable sources. At the same time, trust does not imply accepting information uncritically. Rather, students indicate that they have become more skilled at evaluating information by comparing sources and examining how news stories are produced.



Student fact-checking an online source

Notably, for some students, more critical media use coincided with a more nuanced level of trust in professional journalism. Whereas some participants had previously been inclined to distrust news in general, they reported that they now have a better understanding of how journalistic information is gathered and verified. As a result, trust in news has increased in some cases, while a critical attitude towards framing and potential bias has been maintained. As one student explained: "Before I wouldn't trust

[5]Kerstens, J., Schulz, D., Welvaadt, T., & van Bruggen, M. (2023). *Digitaal Doolhof. Een onderzoek naar online gedrag, online incidenten en online wijsheid onder jongeren in Leeuwarden*. Leeuwarden: NHL-Stenden.

Kerstens, J., Schulz, D., & Hashmi, B. (2021). *Cyberwijs? Een onderzoek naar online gedrag, online incidenten en online wijsheid onder Amsterdamse scholieren.* Leeuwarden: NHL-Stenden.

any news, and now my trust in news is slowly restored, even though I am still very skeptical."

3.2 Changes in Digital Media Literacy

The benchmark data show that students do not always rate their own ability to recognise certain forms of misleading or inaccurate online content highly. This underlines the importance of further developing digital media literacy. Students reported progress in several areas, including adopting a more critical and conscious approach to online information, strengthening their research skills, and gaining a deeper understanding of how digital information ecosystems function.

A recurring theme throughout the evaluations is a more active and critical engagement with online information. Students reported that they more frequently check the origin of information, compare information across multiple sources, and are less likely to accept information as true without verification. Source verification and fact-checking were regularly mentioned as important skills. This development is illustrated by the following student reflection: "Normally, I tend to believe almost everything I read on the internet. Now I realise much more clearly that there are many people who try to steer you in a particular (political) direction through the information they share."



Geolocation exercise during a workshop

Several students also described broader professional development. They indicated that they now work more systematically, have gained greater confidence in their research approach, and apply the research skills acquired through the MIL in other parts of their studies. As a result, they perceive these skills as being relevant not only within the MIL but also for their overall academic and professional development.

Students do not perceive AI and algorithms as isolated topics but as integral parts of the broader digital information ecosystem. They reported becoming more aware of both the opportunities and the risks associated with AI, for example in the generation of information and images, as well as the influence of algorithms on the content they encounter online. AI ethics and the responsible use of AI were also identified as important areas of learning.

3.3 Learning in a Community

In addition to individual skill development, collaborative learning emerged as an important added value of the MIL. Students appreciated the opportunity to conduct research together, discuss findings, and exchange different perspectives. As one student noted: “I always had a problem deciding whether a source was reliable or not. It was really nice to have a partner, because we could talk about it and really check things. For me, that was very helpful.” Peer learning played a clear role in this process. Participants learned not only from lecturers, researchers, and experts, but also from the experiences, ideas, and approaches of their fellow students. Similar effects have been identified in previous projects conducted by the Professorship OSM, in which students investigated influencer channels on social media.[6]

Students also described the community as an environment in which they felt sufficiently safe to ask questions, share ideas, and express differing opinions. According to participants, this contributed to their engagement and motivation. The sense of working together on current and relevant societal issues strengthened their connection to the MIL. As one student explained: “I think the community helped us stay motivated because there was a kind of group effect. You feel safer, and it becomes easier to discuss ideas.”

This collaborative approach also influenced the way students engage with news and societal developments. By discussing information and interpretations with others, students were exposed to perspectives that differed from their own. Jointly reflecting on complex events helped them not only to assess facts but also to become aware of their own assumptions and emotional responses. Learning within the MIL therefore had not only a cognitive dimension but also a social one.

---

[6] Schulz, D., & Kleijweg, A. (2022). *Cocreating Online Research Methods During COVID-19: Using Teams and Padlet to Cocreate a Codebook for Online Content Analysis*. SAGE Publications, Ltd. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529603675
Schulz, D., der Woud, A. van, & Westhof, J. (2020). The best indycaster project: Analysing and understanding meaningful YouTube content, dialogue and commitment as part of responsible management education. *The International Journal of Management Education*, 18(1), 100335. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2019.100335

Students described the community as an important learning environment. Through discussing sources, analysing news stories, and exchanging viewpoints, they strengthened their ability to critically evaluate information. For many students, the community also served as a source of motivation to remain actively engaged with issues related to news and media.

Students further indicated that face-to-face meetings and collaborative activities made a significant contribution to their learning process. Situations in which they conducted research together, verified sources, or carried out fact-checking activities facilitated active knowledge sharing and created opportunities for in-depth discussion and reflection.
Face-to-face interaction was regarded as particularly important. The combination of collaborative assignments, discussions, workshops, and in-person meetings enabled students to ask questions directly, exchange experiences, and work together effectively. It was precisely this combination of practice, discussion, and reflection that students identified as especially meaningful.

3.4 Most and Least Valued Components

The most highly valued aspects of the MIL were activities in which students conducted their own research and worked directly with information and sources. Practice-oriented research, OSINT exercises, and fact-checking activities were frequently mentioned as opportunities for students to apply and develop new skills. The fact-checking marathon was also perceived as particularly valuable, as it enabled students to engage intensively and concretely with a research question.

Guest lectures and workshops delivered by professionals were similarly well received. Students specifically identified the workshop led by Christiaan Triebert, who works as an investigative journalist for The New York Times, as inspiring and memorable. Participants appreciated the combination of real-world examples, research techniques, and interactive elements, which made the session especially engaging.



Guest lecture by Christiaan Triebert on his work at The New York Times



Workshop on geolocation by Christiaan Triebert

The aspects considered less valuable were primarily those in which the relationship between the activity, the learning objectives, and the expected outcomes was less clear. In larger projects, such as the AI guideline project and the fact-checking marathon, students expressed a need for greater clarity regarding planning, expectations, task allocation, and feedback. The appreciation of an activity therefore appeared to depend not only on its content but also on the extent to which it was well organised and embedded within the programme.

Students also mentioned several practical organisational issues, including a lack of clarity regarding scheduling and communication, as well as differing expectations concerning the role of participants. These issues appeared to affect the accessibility and continuity of the programme rather than students' appreciation of its substantive themes and content.

3.5 Development Needs for the MIL

The evaluation identified several areas for further development in the next phase of the MIL. The first concerns the need for greater structure. While students value the freedom to explore topics of their own interest, they also expressed a need for clearer planning, more defined phases, and explicit expectations. A more consistent structure could provide direction without limiting opportunities for initiative and independent inquiry.

A second area for development relates to communication. Students highlighted the need for timely information about schedules, activities, expectations, and the ways in which outcomes are shared. Greater clarity regarding the roles of students, lecturers, researchers, and professionals could also strengthen collaboration within the MIL.

In addition, further curriculum integration is desirable. Students participate in the MIL from different programmes and with varying expectations. A clearer connection between participation, learning outcomes, educational activities, and research assignments could enhance the value of the experience and support the sustainable embedding of the MIL within academic programmes.

Finally, students expressed a desire to continue developing their skills in research, journalism, source evaluation, and media literacy. There was particular interest in more advanced learning opportunities related to AI, investigative journalism, and independent research. The evaluation therefore points not only to a need for greater content-specific depth, but also to a desire for sustained opportunities to further develop and practise these skills over time.

Overall, the findings indicate that students particularly value a combination of practice-oriented research, critical reflection, and collaborative learning. For the future development of the MIL, an important challenge will be to strengthen its organisational structure and curriculum integration while preserving the exploratory and student-driven character of the lab.

4 Conclusion and Reflection

This evaluation suggests that the pilot phase of the Media Investigation Lab supported the development of participating students' digital media literacy. The most significant outcome is that students developed a more critical, conscious, and investigative approach to news, online information, and social media. Participants reported verifying sources more frequently, comparing different perspectives, and reflecting more consciously on the influence of algorithms, framing, and AI within the digital information ecosystem. As one student expressed it: "I am now more mindful of what I believe." In addition, students further developed their research skills, fact-checking abilities, and use of OSINT methods.



Students participating in the MIL

An important insight is that this development takes place within an information ecosystem in which social media play a central role. Students regularly encounter news through platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. At the same time, they are aware of the limitations and risks associated with these ecosystems, including algorithmic selection, filter bubbles, disinformation, and the lack of contextual information. The evaluation therefore shows that, for students, media literacy is not only about recognising unreliable information but also about understanding the ecosystem in which information is selected, distributed, and interpreted.

Another notable finding is that students reported not only a more critical attitude but also a better understanding of how journalism and digital information ecosystems function. For some students, this even resulted in a renewed trust in professional media, while they continued to critically assess the reliability, framing, and potential bias of information sources.

Earlier projects conducted by OSM, such as De PIT, highlighted the importance of community building. The MIL pilot evaluation provides further indications that collaboration, shared reflection, and a supportive learning environment play an important role in students' learning experiences. Students valued the opportunity to conduct research collaboratively, discuss current societal issues, and learn from different perspectives. The safe learning environment encouraged reflection, critical dialogue, and knowledge exchange among students, lecturers, researchers, and professionals. In this way, the MIL fulfilled not only an educational function but also a social function, enabling participants to collectively make sense of complex societal developments.

At the same time, the evaluation indicates that the MIL remains in an early stage of development. The pilot demonstrates the potential of the concept while also revealing the need for further refinement in terms of structure, organisation, and integration within educational programmes. Consequently, the findings should primarily be regarded as exploratory insights that provide direction for the continued development of the MIL.

5 Recommendations

Based on the findings, five recommendations are proposed for the further development of the Media Investigation Lab.

1. **Strengthen the Balance Between Structure and Autonomy**

Students value the freedom to investigate topics of their own interest, while also expressing a need for greater clarity regarding planning, expectations, and ways of working. It is therefore recommended to develop a clear annual structure with fixed phases for introduction, research, reflection, and presentation, while maintaining sufficient room for individual choice and initiative.

2. **Continue Investing in Practice-Oriented Research**

Students identified practical research activities, fact-checking, OSINT assignments, and independent research projects as the most valuable learning experiences. It is recommended that these components be further expanded and given a central role in future editions of the MIL.

3. **Further Invest in Community Building**

The community aspect of the MIL appears to be a crucial condition for learning. It is therefore advisable to devote greater attention to community building, knowledge sharing, and collective reflection, particularly at the beginning of the academic year. Organising broader debates and reflection sessions may further support learning from diverse perspectives and strengthen student engagement.

4. **Strengthen the Connection with Learning Outcomes and Academic Programmes**

The pilot demonstrated that students participated in the MIL in different ways. To ensure sustainable integration, it is important to strengthen the connection between the lab and existing curricula, research assignments, and programme learning outcomes. In the coming academic year, the learning outcomes addressed by each activity will therefore be made explicit. Such a clear alignment will help students better understand the purpose of specific activities and provide academic programmes with greater insight into the educational objectives supported by the MIL.

5. **Develop a Systematic Evaluation and Monitoring Approach**

The current evaluation provides valuable insights but is based on a relatively small group of participants. For the next phase, it is recommended to monitor learning outcomes systematically over a longer period. Monitoring should focus in particular on the development of digital media literacy, research skills, AI literacy, and the role of the community in the learning process. This will enable the impact of the MIL to be assessed more robustly and support its continued development in an evidence-informed manner.

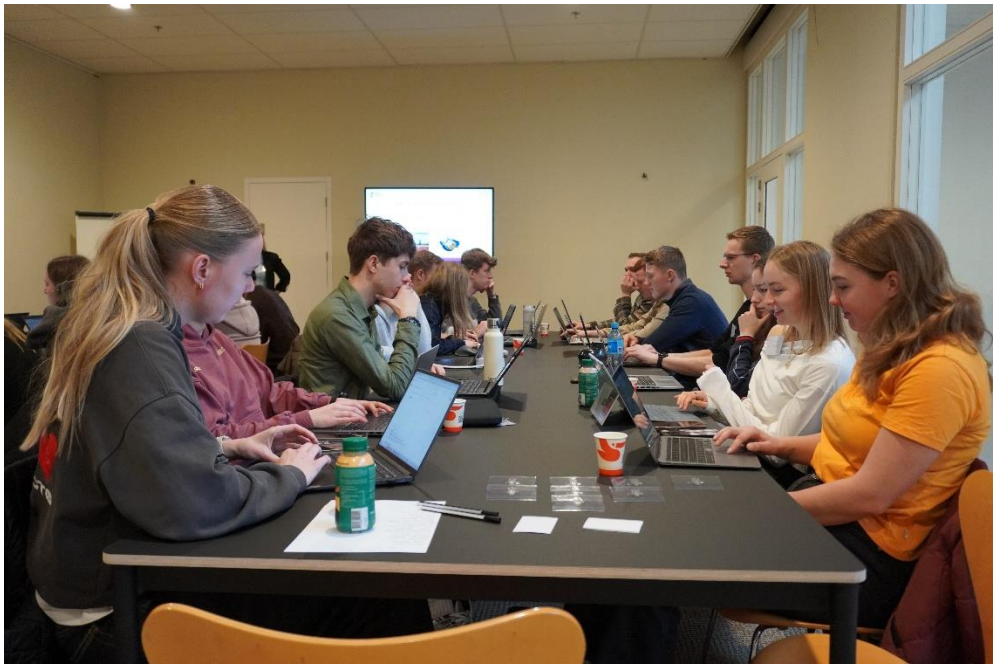
6 Future Outlook

In the 2026–2027 academic year, the MIL will enter its next phase, expanding its activities to students from a wider range of educational programmes. Alongside this expansion, a research project partially supported by a Regieorgaan SIA Fellowship will investigate the MIL's contribution to digital media literacy and the conditions needed for its further development and scaling.

The pilot evaluation suggests that the MIL offers a promising learning environment in which students can critically engage with real-world issues related to the digital information ecosystem they navigate in everyday life. Inquiry, reflection, and collaboration emerged as important elements of this approach.

The next phase will focus on strengthening the structure and continuity of the MIL while preserving the experimental and collaborative character of the living lab. Particular attention will be given to practice-oriented research, community building, and more systematic monitoring of student learning outcomes.

The findings from this first evaluation provide a starting point for these developments and for further research into how living labs and learning communities can contribute to digital media literacy in higher education.



Students participating in the MIL

References

Kerstens, J., Schulz, D., & Hashmi, B. (2021). *Cyberwijs? Een onderzoek naar online gedrag, online incidenten en online wijsheid onder Amsterdamse scholieren.* NHL Stenden Hogeschool.

Kerstens, J., Schulz, D., Welvaadt, T., & van Bruggen, M. (2023). *Digitaal doolhof. Een onderzoek naar online gedrag, online incidenten en online wijsheid onder jongeren in Leeuwarden.* NHL Stenden Hogeschool.

Schulz, D., Kerstens, J., & Sajoe, D. (2026). Getting a grip on disinformation: From distrust to trust within learning communities. In S. J. Shackelford, F. Douzet, & C. Ankersen (Eds.), *Securing democracies* (pp. 345–370). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009574105.018

Schulz, D., & Kleijweg, A. (2022). *Cocreating online research methods during COVID-19: Using Teams and Padlet to cocreate a codebook for online content analysis*. SAGE Publications. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529603675

Schulz, D., van der Woud, A., & Westhof, J. (2020). The best indycaster project: Analysing and understanding meaningful YouTube content, dialogue and commitment as part of responsible management education. *The International Journal of Management Education, 18*(1), Article 100335. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2019.100335

