

**32nd General Assembly and CIETA Congress**  
**Monday, September 27 to Thursday, September 30, 2027**  
**University of Uppsala, Uppsala, Sweden**

**Material Literacy**  
**Call for papers**

The concept of **Material Literacy** is highly relevant to historical textile studies and to textile analysis in particular. It is at the core of CIETA's engagement in the field of textile research. Material literacy has been broadly described as 'a term that denotes a broad sensitivity to materials and their characteristics'. Material literacy is gained through interaction with objects and craft practices.

A researcher who has acquired material literacy recognizes the role of skill in the structure and construction of textiles. This competence develops over time through practical experience with original textiles. It enables complex readings related to craft, the interaction of multiple variables (including, fibre, skill, tools, time), and consequently the identification of material evidence. Material literacy provides a basis for assessing, for example, the specific techniques which were used to make a textile object, an insight into the tools employed to do it, whether something was easy or difficult to make, and how time-consuming the task was. The acquisition of material literacy relies on explicitly acknowledging the nature and extent of a researcher's expertise and experience and how these have been acquired.

Despite the utility of material literacy in textile research, it has never been precisely defined or theorized. An increasingly digital society renders individuals less capable of understanding the materiality of the world around them. This CIETA conference explores critical issues in material literacy – including its acquisition, training for it, and the usefulness of declaring personal expertise and experience (positionality) in textile research.

Contributions are invited on the following topics:

- How researchers read objects in order to interpret how materials have been manipulated into textiles
- How material literacy is developed in relation to specific textile types
- Protocols for analyzing different categories of woven and non-woven textiles
- Evidence for material literacy in the past
- A specific textile researcher's acquisition of material literacy (positionality) and the resulting output
- The challenges of teaching and learning material literacy
- Case studies demonstrating the need for material literacy in research