Toward a 4.0 Media Literacy:
Contemporary Voices

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Toward a 4.0 Media Literacy: Contemporary Voices

In Search of a Blueprint…

Welcome to our conversation in which we focus on the challenge of yet another era in media literacy that we are calling *Media Literacy 4.0.*

The mission of T*he Journal of Media Literacy* is to explore the best of the current philosophies and practices, to challenge our readers to create a culture in which critical thinking and media literacy will thrive, and to work toward building this media-wise, literate, global society. In this issue, we present a collection of varied voices, an inventory of current thinking in search of a blueprint of where our vision can take us, and help new readers sort out what is out there now. This by no means represents or reflects a full recognition of the depth on which Media Literacy 4.0 rests. It would take volumes to acknowledge the multitude of accomplishments, concepts, philosophies, and insights that are present in the interconnected fields within media literacy today. This issue asks leading thinkers to define their work, their approach, their philosophy, their predictions, trends, and essential elements for the future. Within our diversity and plurality, can we find a unity of thought, a measure of who we are at our inner core? Can we build on that unifying strength to reach the vision of "a more mature Media Literacy 4.0"?

All of this is not new. Through the past six decades, JML has witnessed and chronicled the paradigm shifts that were brought about by changing tools such as radio to television to cable and satellites, and then onto the digital world. What seemed like cataclysmic cultural shifts at the time in turn became the norm and the mundane. Looking back through the early pages of our journal, it now seems quaint to read about the concerns of parents and educators over the effects of *The Lone Ranger* on the radio or *Howdy Doody* on television. Today, we are concerned about *SnapChat* and *Grand Theft Auto.* And we worry about what our children may be encountering on the Internet and on their iPhones.

All of this has been a crucial part of the evolving ecology of childhood. Then, as now, it is a matter of "becoming aware of the waters in which we swim." We cannot blindly accept these changing technologies, but must be critical thinkers and active participants in the process.

This has been the message and the driving principle behind our work for the past sixty years. Since the days of the American Council for Better Broadcasts, the ideas of critical thinking and actively responding have transcended whatever were the latest technological changes of the time. The phrase critical thinking skills can be seen repeatedly in our archives and specifically in the work of Dr. Edgar Dale of Ohio State University. In 1956, he said, "We must become critical listeners…bring our intelligence to bear upon the kinds of choices which we are making, be critical-minded, not sponge-minded." Through the work of many scholars since, both in the U.S. and abroad, the framework of media literacy has expanded and evolved, influenced by other complementary disciplines, bolstered by research and practice, keeping up with the complexity of the modern world.

The authors featured in this issue represent a diverse, yet deeply united group of today's scholars who are on the frontline of *Media Literacy 4.0.* Our eighteen authors examine contemporary education and acknowledge the need for a new way to become educated in the 21st Century. They define the current state of education with all of its opportunities

and limitations. They suggest and implement potential and applied research projects that will shape the future of the field. They challenge current media literacy thinking and its balance between analysis, advocacy, and activism. Finally, they put forward viable philosophies that champion authenticity, adaptability and creativity.

In the spirit of such a united, collaborative task, we hope this issue of the Journal offers both a visionary and a realistic beginning to the quest for a humanity that is truly literate. As Dr. Bronston states in his article, in the face of the long-established obstacles, we need to rise above the status quo and be "willing to implement what is now possible to transform education into an unimaginable force for humanity." Bronston unites us in our cause by saying that "we are all in the struggle to understand and move others where there is no blueprint or prior experience to be certain. We have no way out, but to proceed with courage, passion and imagination together."

Our deepest thanks go to Marty Rayala, our visionary editor for this issue, and to the outstanding authors who have given so generously of their time and talent as the architects for an Age of *Media Literacy 4.0.*

Marieli Rowe

Karen Ambrosh
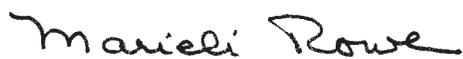
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Revisualizing a Mature Media Literacy

by Martin Rayala, Ph.D.

Dr. Martin Rayala is Chief Academic Officer for Design-Lab Schools and an editor for the Journal of Media Literacy. He was named the 2015 Outstanding Design Educator by the National Art Education Association and was a writer for the first ever National Standards for Media Arts. He is a founder of the Delaware Design-Lab High School.

I n this issue of the Journal of Media Literacy we invite you to follow our journey toward a re-visualization of mature media literacy for the 21st century. The challenge is to conceptualize a system in which individuals, organizations and institutions find the wisdom and courage, to honor the wellbeing of others in a non-hierarchical system that goes beyond the traditional collectivization model. The field of media literacy, by its nature, requires a fast, flexible, and fluid paradigm that is more adaptive and co-creative than previous models of societal organization.

Media Literacy is a relatively young field so it remains ill defined and still a bit amorphous. Like most complex systems, media literacy exists in several stages of maturation simultaneously depending on individuals, organizations and local history.

Level 1.0 is the initial developmental level in which a hierarchical authority controls the field. I recall once being chastised by a state education agency official for referring to "media literacy" when the approved term at the time was "information literacy". One presenter at a media literacy conference was publicly challenged for using a list of media literacy principles that differed from those approved by the conference organization. The current development of Media Arts standards has been carefully controlled and sanctioned by an authorizing body. These top-down proclivities are characteristic of Level 1.0 paradigms.

Level 2.0 is the next developmental level in which a sort of free-market atmosphere prevails and a variety of views and directions spring up with people and organizations jockeying for control in a competitive environment. At this level, a multitude of interest groups sprout up, each arguing for the logic of their perspectives. Media Literacy, Media Education, Media Advocacy, Media Arts, and other directions have developed over the last half-century, each with their own advocates and constituents. In 1996, Renee Hobbs referred to this somewhat optimistically as the Big Tent but it currently looks more like a feudal society with many unaligned fiefdoms. Wikipedia is an example of a challenge to the traditional institutional approval model associated with encyclopedias.

Level 3.0 is characterized by negotiated coordination among organized interest groups. This is like the original colonies and territories deciding to form the United States of America. This stage is

always tenuous with vestigial differences remaining among the formerly independent groups and threats of secession and civil war. The Soviet Union was unable to maintain this level of organization and the United States fought a bloody Civil War to maintain its union. The United Nations struggles with partial and tenuous coordination among nations. The Big Tent has not yet been pitched for Media Literacy.

Level 4.0 is on the horizon but not yet emerging in the media literacy field. At level 4.0 there is an awareness that values the autonomy of all others and serves the well being of the whole. As the existing agents in the system begin to mature to a higher level of awareness of their own level of operation, a new paradigm, system, or logic develops that is co-creative and holds the space for cross-organization innovation that engages stakeholders from all points of view.

Each individual, organization and institution engages in its own brand of Media Education, Media Literacy, Digital Media, Visual Literacy, Information Literacy, Media Effects, English Language Arts, Global/Cultural Literacy, Media Arts, Media Advocacy, Media Protectionism, etc. At Level 4.0, it is not so important what is done or how it is done but on the quality of awareness from which the people in the system operate. Letting go of the past in order to connect with and learn from emerging future possibilities, we need to attend to our interior conditions and the quality of our intentions. In the emerging future, Media Literacy (and all areas of education) will need to respond to the highest future possibilities of not only what we know and what we do, but also who we are being.

Media literacy guru Len Masterman reflected this non-hierarchical, open-ended approach to media literacy when he said, "…you can teach about the media most effectively, not through a content-centered approach, but through the application of a conceptual framework which can help pupils to make sense of any media text. …My own objectives were to liberate pupils from the expertise of the teacher, and to challenge the dominant hierarchical transmission of knowledge that takes place in most classrooms. In media studies information is transmitted laterally, to both students and teachers alike. The teacher's role is not to advocate a particular view but to promote reflection upon media texts, and develop the kind of questioning and analytical skills, which will help students to clarify their own views."

In media literacy, we are not so much faced with problems to solve, but with creating a clearing for emerging possible futures beyond our imaginations. We invite you to become part of the conversation around our visions of the future we would like to see and the role of media literacy in realizing that future. For this exercise we are not starting from what is wrong or what needs to be fixed. We will attempt to set aside natural tendencies toward cynicism, pessimism and despair. We want to imagine, design and create an unimaginable future of freedom, full self-expression, joy and passion through media literacy.

The principles and practices of media literacy haven't changed much in the last fifty years. The only change seems to be in the number of individuals and groups that claim to have originated the ideas. It has become a little like Al Gore claiming to have invented the Internet.

Changes in Media

While the principles and practices of media literacy haven't changed much, the media have changed at an exponential rate over the last 50 years. The observation made in 1965 by Gordon Moore, co-founder of Intel, that the number of transistors per square inch on integrated circuits had doubled every year since the integrated circuit was invented explains why media develop so rapidly. Moore predicted that this trend would continue for the foreseeable future and his prediction has been remarkably accurate for over half a century.

Other changes have been noticed as well. Movies were historically considered superior to television but recently a number of significant Hollywood filmmakers like David Lynch, Steven Spielberg and Oliver Stone have begun producing material for television. Steven Soderbergh said, "In terms of cultural real estate, TV has really taken control of the

conversation that used to be the reserve of movies. It's sort of a second golden age of television…"

Many say we are in the second golden age of television. The first golden age stretched from the early 1960s to around the mid-80s characterized by dramas like The Prisoner, NYPD Blue, Columbo and Star Trek. The idea that we are living through a second period of key creativity in television is becoming more apparent. Much of this creativity comes from new distribution venues like HBO. The second golden age of American TV was built on a new funding model, led by HBO and taken up by AMC (*Breaking Bad, Mad Men*) and Showtime (*Dexter, Homeland, The Big C*). These are subscription channels that did for television what American independent cinema did for movies.

Steven Soderbergh produced *Behind the Candelabra*, a biopic with big-name actors about the extravagant piano-playing entertainer Liberace, through HBO films rather than the traditional Hollywood system. Soderbergh's film, with Michael Douglas as Liberace and Matt Damon as his secret sexual partner, was refused backing by major studios until HBO decided to extend its TV license to film.

While many mistakenly think of movies as "long-form" media (films two hours in length) and television as short form media (half-hour TV shows and 60 second commercials), serialization actually allows television to provide longer story arcs than movies. Television serialization gives actors, writers and directors the chance to dramatize the passage of time in ways that movies find it difficult to do.

TV shows like *Breaking Bad* and *The Big C*, in which characters have cancer, can be carefully developed over many seasons (100 hours) where movies need to resolve the crisis inside two hours. TV shows like *The Sopranos* and *The West Wing*, derivative of movies like *Goodfella*s and *The American President*, were able to give Martin Sheen and James Gandolfini time to develop their characters.

But even this newfound status for television is now being challenged by online distribution. Distribution of media content is moving from the TV industry to online sources. Kevin Spacey's *House of*

Cards was released online by Netflix rather than on TV. The second golden age of television may already be over. Streaming is replacing being "on air". Viewers often binge watch entire seasons in daylong online immersion sessions.

Education is Traditional

Education has typically lagged behind the rest of the world in accepting change. Educators traditionally see their role as passing on information and ideas that were created before the students were born. Educators often resisted new media as being lowbrow entertainment but, as new forms come along, they become willing to tentatively embrace old forms that are then seen as safely "traditional". Educators initially resisted photography, movies, and television until they were replaced by newer forms. It became popular to praise black and white photography in protest and resistance to the development of color photography. Wet labs are defended in high school photography classes for their "get your hands wet" traditional values now that digital photography is the norm. Perhaps, now that online media distribution is becoming the norm, educators will embrace traditional television in protest.

Television is still a guilty pleasure among educators but it's almost a social requirement in the rest of the world. TV critic Andy Greenwald says about television, "It's really become, I think, the dominant cultural medium of our time, in terms of discussion, in terms of inspiration, in terms of excitement."

The revolution in content production in media has been largely driven and enabled by the change in how consumers access programming. The first wave of television came as a proliferation of TV channels available via cable/satellite/telco subscriptions. The second wave is the on-demand availability of content through streaming services like Amazon Prime, Hulu Plus and Netflix, powered by devices like Roku, Apple TV, Amazon Fire TV and gaming consoles like Xbox. Standalone niche networks that are available 24/7 in a channel format via apps and online are also part of this wave.

The growing availability of streaming services, combined with restrictions on content access and

high prices of the cable/satellite/telco providers, have given rise to the "cord cutter" phenomenon, in which some consumers like me cancel their cable/satellite/telco service altogether, watch local TV with old-fashioned antennas and stream content on our computers and mobile devices to meet the rest of our entertainment needs.

The Future is Media Everywhere and in Everything

It appears that distribution of media may be moving from screens to objects. The Internet of Things (IoT) is the term for a process in which objects, animals or people are provided with unique identifiers and the ability to transfer data over a network without requiring human-to-human or human-to-computer interaction.

The Internet of Things (IoT) is the network of physical objects or "things" embedded with electronics, software, sensors and connectivity to enable it to achieve greater value and service by exchanging data with the manufacturer, operator and/or other connected devices. Each thing is uniquely identifiable through its embedded computing system but is able to operate within the existing Internet infrastructure.

The term "Internet of Things" is attributed to a British visionary, Kevin Ashton, in 1999. The media industry appears to be moving away from the traditional approach of using specific media environments such as newspapers, magazines, or television shows and instead tap into consumers with technologies that reach targeted people at optimal times in optimal locations. The ultimate aim is to convey, a message or content that is in line with the consumer's mindset. For example, publishing environments are increasingly tailoring messages (advertisements) and content (articles) to appeal to consumers that have been exclusively gleaned through various data-mining activities.

The Internet of Things creates an opportunity to measure, collect and analyze an ever-increasing variety of behavioral statistics. The Internet of Things transforms the media industry, companies

and even governments, opening up a new era of economic growth and competitiveness. The wealth of data generated by this industry (i.e. Big Data) will allow practitioners in Advertising and Media to develop an elaborate extension of the present targeting mechanisms utilized by the industry.

We will have media reception, production, and distribution devices in our clothes, our bodies, and throughout our environments with the capacity for large-scale data acquisition, ubiquitous connectivity, and immersion in augmented and virtual realities beyond our current imaginations. ❖

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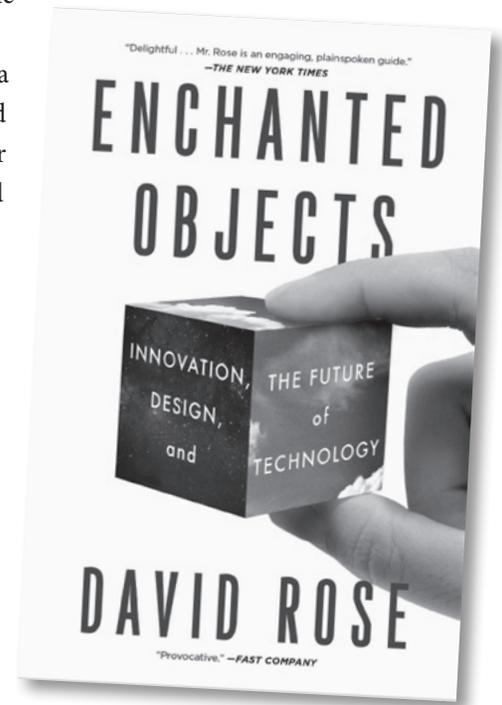
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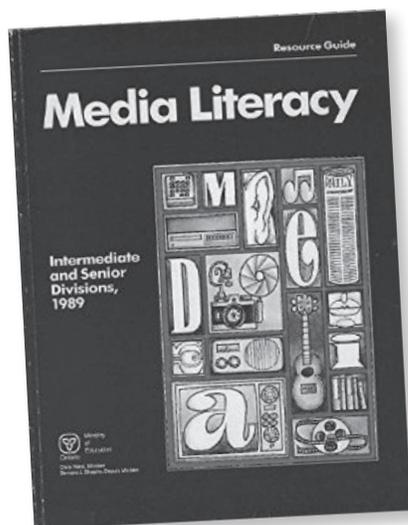
Key Concepts of Media Literacy
From The Media Literacy Resource Guide

Published by the Association for Media Literacy, Toronto 1989

1. All media are constructions.

Perhaps the most important concept in media literacy education is that the media do not present simple reflections of external reality: they present productions, which have specific purposes. The success of these productions lies in their apparent naturalness. However, although they appear to be natural, they are in fact carefully-crafted constructions that have been subjected to a broad range of determinants and decisions. From a technical point of view, they are often superb, and this, coupled with our familiarity with such productions, makes it almost impossible for us to see them as anything other than a seamless extension of reality. Our task is to expose the complexities of media texts and therefore make the seams visible.

2. The media construct reality.

All of us have a "construct," the picture we have built up in our heads since birth, of what the world is and how it works. It is a model based on the sense that we have made of all our observations and experiences. When, however, a major part of those observations and experiences come to us pre-constructed by the media, with attitudes, interpretations, and conclusions already built in, then the media, rather than we ourselves, are constructing our reality.

3. Audiences negotiate meaning in media.

Basic to an understanding of media is an awareness of how we interact with media texts. When we look at any media text, each of us finds meaning through a wide variety of factors: personal needs and anxieties, the pleasures or troubles of the day, racial and sexual attitudes, family and cultural background. All of these have a bearing on how we process information. For example, the way in which two students respond to a television situation comedy (sitcom) depends on what each brings to the text. In short each of us finds or "negotiates" meaning in different ways. Media teachers, therefore, have to be open to the ways in which students have individually experienced the text with which they are dealing.

4. Media have commercial implications.

Media literacy includes an awareness of the economic basis of mass media production and how it impinges on content, techniques and distribution. We should be aware that, for all practical purposes, media production is a business and must make a profit. In the case of the television industry, for example, all programs—news, public affairs, or entertainment–must be judged by the size of the audience they generate. A primetime American network show with fewer than 20 million viewers will not generally be kept on the air. Audience sampling and rating services also provide advertisers with detailed demographic breakdowns of audiences for specific media. A knowledge of this allows students to understand how program content makes them targets for advertisers and organizes viewers into marketable groups.

The issue of ownership, control and related effects should also be explored. The tendency, both here in Canada and in some other countries, has been towards increased concentration of ownership of the individual media in fewer and fewer hands, as well as the development of integrated ownership patterns across several media. What this means in practical terms is that a relatively small number of individuals decide what television programs will be broadcast, what films will be screened, what music will be recorded and aired, and what issues will be investigated and reported. For example, many cities in Ontario have only one daily newspaper, and often

it is part of a large chain. This has many implications for the reporting of controversial stories and for investigative journalism.

5. Media contain ideological and value messages.

Media literacy involves an awareness of the ideological implications and value systems of media texts. All media products are advertising in some sense—for themselves, but also for the values or ways of life. They usually affirm the existing social system. The ideological messages contained in, for example, a typical Hollywood television narrative are almost invisible to North Americans, but they would be much more apparent to people in developing countries. Typical mainstream North American media convey a number of explicit and implicit ideological messages, which can include some or all of the following: the nature of "the good life" and the role of affluence in it, the virtues of "consumerism," the proper role of women, the acceptance of authority, and unquestioning patriotism. We need to use decoding techniques in order to uncover these ideological messages and value systems. In dealing with these patterns, the teacher will be using both media literacy techniques and values education strategies.

6. Media have social and political implications.

An important dimension of media literacy is an awareness of the broad range of social and political effects stemming from the media. (These two categories are not too rigid, and they will inevitably overlap.) Students should be aware of the effects of media in such areas as the changing nature of family life and the use of leisure time. Although the mass media may not be directly responsible for creating values and attitudes, they serve to legitimize and reinforce them. This helps to explain why there is considerable peer pressure for students to belong to a group that consumes the same media products. The mass media thus often become the matrix within which young people define their relationships to their popular culture as well as to their friends.

In a larger context, the media today are closely linked with the world of politics and social change.

Television can elect a national leader largely on the basis of image. At the same time it can involve us in civil rights issues, a famine in Africa, or an incident of international terrorism. For better or for worse, we have all become intimately involved in national concerns and global issues.

For Canadians, our domination by American media has obvious cultural implications. The struggle for a distinctive Canadian identity will continue to be difficult, a challenge that media literacy programs need to address.

7. Form and content are closely related in the media.

Students should be able to see the close relationship between form and content. Central to this awareness is the thesis advanced by Marshall McLuhan that each medium has its own grammar and codifies reality in unique ways. Thus, different media will report the same event but create different impressions and different messages.

8. Each medium has a unique aesthetic form.

Students should have the opportunity to develop media literacy skills that will enable them not only to decode and understand media texts, but also to enjoy the unique aesthetic form of each. Our enjoyment of media is enhanced by an awareness of how pleasing forms or effects are created. Just as we note with pleasure pleasing rhythms in speech or poetry or the effective use of a literary device in a novel, we experience pleasure in our appreciation of media texts when we understand their technical artistry.

When all these concepts have been understood and validated by practical, creative, or production experiences, students should be able to apply their skills and general awareness to any specific media product they encounter. This process enables students to establish and maintain the kind of critical distance on their culture that makes possible critical autonomy: the ability to decode, encode, and evaluate the symbol systems that dominate their world. ❈

World-Building as a New Media Literacy:
A Conversation Between Alex McDowell and Henry Jenkins

Alex McDowell RDI is an award-winning designer and storyteller working at the intersection of emergent technologies and experiential media. McDowell was a production designer with 30 years experience in feature films, working with directors David Fincher, Steven Spielberg, Terry Gilliam and Anthony Minghelia among others. He was the production designer for *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas, Man of Steel, The Watchmen, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Fight Club* and *Minority Report*. His production design work on *Minority Report* is considered seminal both for its vision of near future technology and its integration with people's behavior, and is believed to have resulted in nearly 100 patents for new technologies. He is now a Professor of Practice in Media Arts + Practice at USC School of Cinematic Arts, where he teaches world building. He is director of the USC World Building Media Lab (WbML), where McDowell and his interdisciplinary students build immersive worlds for storytelling and narrative design practice across multiple platforms. The WbML was awarded the prestigious Future Voice Award at the 2014 Interaction Awards in Amsterdam. He also leads the USC 5D Institute, a renowned cross media knowledge space. He is recipient, from George Lucas, of the William Cameron Menzies endowed chair in Production Design.

Henry Jenkins is the Provost's Professor of Communication, Journalism, Cinematic Arts, and Education at the University of Southern California. Jenkins joined USC from the Massachussetts Institute of Technology, where he was the Peter De Florez Professor in the Humanities. He was the founder and co-director of MIT's Comparative Media Studies graduate program from 1993-2009, setting an innovative research agenda, which included public-facing projects in the fields of media literacy, games-based learning, transmedia entertainment and consumer research, civic media, and digital humanities. Since coming to USC, his research focuses have included work on reading in a participatory culture, professional development programs for supporting participatory learning, the impact of new systems of circulation on the media industry, and most recently, the political and civic lives of American youth. His most recent books include *Spreadable Media: Creating Meaning and Value in a Networked Culture* (With Sam Ford and Joshua Green), *Reading in a Participatory Culture: Remixing Moby-Dick for the Literature Classroom* (With Wyn Kelley, Katie Clinton, Jenna McWilliams, Erin Reilly, and Ricardo Pitts-Wiley), and the 20th anniversary reissue of T*extual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*. He is currently overseeing collaborative work on *By Any Media Necessary: The New Activism of American Youth.* He blogs regularly at henryjenkins.org.
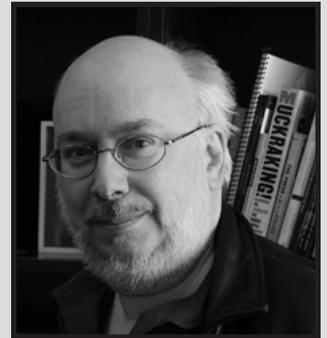
Alex McDowell has worked on such films as *Minority Report, Fight Club, Watchman, Man of Steel*, among many others. Production designers design worlds: that is, they develop a deep understanding of the environment within which a story is set and then translate that grasp of the underlying systems that impact that world into the design of what we see on the screen. Every detail we see within the film hints at a larger reality that extends beyond the particular story we are currently watching. The worlds in contemporary films are more richly detailed than ever before, in part because the film may be simply a springboard for a wide array of other media experiences, and with the

rise of various kinds of immersive, virtual, and augmented reality practices, these worlds will become even more central to our experience of media.

What does this mean for media literacy educators? McDowell has argued that these same modes of thinking about systems and design can prove beneficial for understanding—and envisioning alternatives to—the world we live in: As McDowell explains, "World building is a design/storytelling practice that combines rigorous scientific inquiry with humanistic values to create the entire context—the world—that surrounds a problem or question. This deeply contextualized exploration allows us to reach unforeseen, fresh, deeply satisfying and tangible solutions that can be tested and made manifest in both virtual and real worlds." In that sense world-building may be a skill we should be promoting through our educational system.

What follows is a conversation between McDowell and Henry Jenkins, a USC Professor whose work has dealt with transmedia storytelling, fan culture, and new media literacies. Over 90 minutes, the two talked about the shifts in media industry practices that are putting a new emphasis on world-building and how they are incorporating world-building experiences into their own teaching practices. McDowell recently started teaching and running a World-Building Lab through the University of Southern California, where Jenkins also teaches. We hope that this exchange will spark greater interest amongst educators about the value of bringing world-building into their pedagogy—both as a means of fostering a better understanding of the way contemporary media operate but also as a means of teaching creative problem solving, multidisciplinary research, systems thinking, and collective intelligence.

HJ: How did you get involved with world-building?

AM: My connection to World Building came from really an unplanned series of events with the film, *Minority Report.* When Steven Spielberg took it on, there wasn't a script in place, so he hired the screenwriter Scott Frank and myself on the same day. Scott

and I started work simultaneously and there was no chance there was going to be a script for at least six months. So, we were forced to think about how one would design a world space that didn't yet have a linear narrative to drive it. The world building evolved directly out of solving that problem: how would one think about the full context of a set of conditions that were driven by an idea set rather than a scripted narrative, and how would that both trigger the rules and then allow a linear narrative to develop in a holistic but efficient way. And so we really started saying, 'well, we know some of the rules—what does the world looks like' and it came about like that. As an approach, it hasn't changed radically since.

What do you know about the conditions of the world?—in that case it was a future history, the time was 2055, the place was Washington DC. There were a specific set of socio-political conditions that were driven by the Precogs who had created a murder free or violence free society through their ability to predict violent crime, and then we asked ourselves what would be the outcome of those conditions. Steven Spielberg wanted this to appear to be a benign world. So we had this idea of a world that would work well, that was not fossil fuel driven and that had a contract for green space within an urban space, but the bigger idea was that people would have poured into this city experiment of a murder free society—for protection within the 50 mile radius range of the Precogs - and the intense population growth would have had a direct effect on urban development. What would be the effect on the social strata within the society?

When you do a world build, you have to think so broadly about the world; it isn't really enough just to go into a specific set of answers for a specific set of conditions as you would the script. You have to think about the broader scope: what is education, what is economy, what is trade, how does society function, what does the police force do in this world, etc, etc. And all those things clearly influence one another. We realized very quickly: as you developed one set of logic over here, it would have a butterfly effect on all the other logic sets. Establishing a kind of balance of constantly testing the deep logic with

the overall scope of the world—first in a horizontal slice through the world that defines its broad scope and then in vertical 'core samples', starting where we had the most information. As you get deeper into the world, whatever you discover as you follow these logic points have an effect on all of the other layers. The world emerges almost organically.

So to sum that up, I think World Building is the idea of building a very solid, deeply researched and pervasive foundation that becomes a container for multiple narratives rather than any single narrative. Certainly, in the case of the *Minority Report,* our world supported a single narrative as well, but one might say that you could turn left instead of right out of any doorway, and we would always know what we would expect to see, to find.

HJ: In *Convergence Culture*, I quote a veteran screen writer who said when he entered the industry, he pitched the story because you had to have a great story to make a great movie. And then he said, I pitched characters because you needed to have great characters to support multiple sequels. And now, he said, I pitch worlds because worlds allow you to tell multiple stories about multiple characters across multiple media platforms. That is the trajectory the film industry is moving through. Alex, you have a particularly advanced understanding of what a world is and how it connects in productions, but the whole industry has moved, over the last decade or two, towards seeing world building as a core set of practices for structuring transmedia and digital entertainment experiences.

AM: Does a richly developed world also stimulate great story telling? I don't think we know the answer to that yet. We have seen worlds—even something like *Avatar*—where probably one would argue the world is richer than the stories it contains right now. But Pandora is such a rich world that we have *Avatar* 2, 3 and 4 coming out and all of those narratives are sustained as a result of the richness of the world that James Cameron's team has imagined. The chances are that through the accumulation of narratives, the world becomes even richer and more fully formed.

And in the ways you look at it, the fan has the ability to go deeper and deeper into a world that is richly developed.

HJ: And the world then becomes a platform for grass roots creativity, people mine those fragments and bits and gaps and holes and so forth, they elaborate on them and create new stories. The fan does not need the story to be perfect as long as the world is evocative.

And I can think of any number of contemporary film makers, Tim Burton always comes to mind, who are much much better at world building than story telling. Even Burton's weakest films have evocative worlds. Think about his version of *Planet of the Apes* which was uniformly panned for its story and characters. But his team put an enormous amount of thought into what an ape civilization looks like —the different apes, their cultures, their tools, their houses, their modes of transportation,their music, their clothing, their food, their politics. I find myself wanting to come back to that world and spend more time there. But the story of that particular film is simply a tool which allows us to move across and explore that imaginary realm. I am frustrated that the story is not more coherent in that particular film. Maybe there is a different aesthetic that values beautiful, elaborate worlds that deploys a different set of criteria than one which puts the story at the center.

AM: This becomes very interesting when you think about really truly immersive worlds. Now we can start creating worlds which are not framed for a screen for example. If you are thinking about the fully immersive virtual reality experience, the world is actually a frameless trigger for your own personal narrative. This is what we are discovering with the Leviathan project where we have a flying whale airship in a parallel steampunk universe set in the late 19th century It is a fantastical eco-system that is a self-contained world that is separated from landscape and the rest of humanity, up in the clouds. But mostly it is designed specifically to test the creative system at its core: how do you direct the audience when you don't have a film frame and you don't

have those traditional components of composition and editing. You know, the notion of time and space changes dramatically, the traditions of blocking and directing actors, the edit, the camera frame have gone, or changed radically.

On one level, we are rethinking what it means to create a story that can lead an audience and what relationship is there between an audience and a story in that space. If one imagines an intact world that you can enter, you can take a *Sleep No More* kind of approach where there are multiple strands of a single narrative or multiple braided narratives going on in this world simultaneously. The audience is free to move between those narrative threads. We are assuming that there is a constant time line: everything is in sync with the time line that the arcs of the story are defined, authored and have finite ends and cannot be messed with. Every single person that goes in there, we can imagine, would have a completely unique experience. If they looked left instead of right but the next audience member comes in and looks right instead of left, their experience is different to some extent. And then if they can scrub through time and move through space, they have a completely different set of controls over the story space. But the authors are still defining hopefully these emotional character driven relationships within a richly defined world space. For me, as a designer, creating such a world isn't actually radically different from the way I would design a film because I would design the world and I would design for all the possibilities of the narratives within that world before we know what the specific script narrative is. Up to a point, all the possibilities are there within the world. In a film, you then hone it down and you say we are going to make a set of decisions for the audience that essentially is a linear narrative. We are going to direct their viewpoint and their attention and their reactions and we are going to feed back sound and emotion and vision to them. Only in an immersive virtual world, these decisions are not locked down and the audience is free to roam. We need to re-imagine the components of sound and light and composition and indeed directing the acting, so that the audience can still get an emotional engagement. And now without the world space, the world context —you have nothing. Without the world building, you can't see the stories in that space.

HJ: We are going to be looking at traditional media experiences—film or television—in different ways once the public brings world building assumptions to their screen experiences. Derek Johnson uses the term, over-design, to describe production design today: the world of film is designed to contain more information than is ever used within stories. This rewards viewers who watch these episodes over and

LEVIATHAN, a joint research project with Intel exploring the future of narrative. Developed for both virtual and augmented reality experiences. CREDITS: Design by: Bryan Zhang, Vlad Bina, and Brian Vincent Rhodes II. Illustration by: Brad Newman and Jiedi Chen

over on DVD, they discover new information, notice background details that have always been there but suddenly started to pop and there is a lot of room for speculation as we go beyond the information given within the stories and try to flush out the nature of that world. I often think about *Cabin in the Woods.* There's a scene where the characters are ex-

ploring the basement of a haunted house and there are all kinds of artifacts that they pick up or brush past. Each object evokes a different kind of story, a different genre experience. And the film's main plot gets activated when one character picks out one of those puzzle pieces and engages with it in a deeper way—she starts to read a diary. But, the viewers now have in their heads, in the most tangible way imaginable, all of the other directions this story could have taken, and there are various moments later in this film where the production team reminds us of what those other potential stories were and they also start impacting what happens to the characters.

AM: The nature of the devices through which we now view films has changed the way I design, certainly. So the fact that you can freeze-frame and be able to do repeat viewing in a way you never would have done in early film forces us as film makers to think differently about that layering, about how to give people more satisfaction, more depth, more detail. And yes, it is much easier to do that through the design of the environment than it is to give multiple layers of meaning to the characters or the actions that take place within that space.

HJ: Gradually, we have been pulling out of the conversation two different notions of literacy that teachers might want to think about. One is the literacy involved in World Building for production as a means of thinking through all of the systems which provide a background to the story you are telling and the other is World Building on the level of reception, how are new technologies and production practices influencing how we read popular fictions, how do we think of mise-en-scene in new ways or how do we think about authorship, given so much more of what we know about the world comes from the production designer than the screenwriter or the director. The production designer has thought through the world at a deeper level, has brought together details from which we read the world, that are not driven necessarily by the plot per se, and so forth.

AM: Yes, from the perspective of the production designers, there are some very pragmatic, practical reasons for essentially creating these other layers beyond the script, beyond the story. So, for example, in designing the house for *Fight Club*, this was a setting that was not very clearly described in any specific way in the script or the original book. We built this elaborate back story for the house; we literally mapped a hundred year history of the house, how it evolved in the 1900s, how it had been a classic Victorian house that had been built on the outskirts of the city by a captain of industry, and how that industry had gradually encroached on the outlying landscape and decreased the value of the house. The house had been sublet and subdivided so that there were various architectural changes made to the house. There was a staircase put in so that the back of the house could be sublet. The house has further decreased in value, squatters had moved in and set fires in the place. You saw all of these layers of historical decay going on in the house. Then a fence was put around it for security; the Space Monkeys moved in and started making soap… All of that backstory was serving some very specific needs that go beyond the character-driven narrative. They allowed us to tell the carpenters how to age the set, they allowed us to tell the painters how many layers of wall paper or what period of wall paper should go in, how many different times the molding and trims and doorways and the decorative styles changed in the back of the house, where the conversion has been made. And as a designer in any film, you are answering so many questions a day about those levels of detail just to get through the physical construction of the set in order to put it in the front of the camera. You have to build this container of narrative for yourself just to be able to answer those questions.

But in the case of *Fight Club,* we also had this underlying and essential driver for the plot—which was that Brad Pitt and Ed Norton's character is one and the same and so is impossible for them to be seen in the same room at the same time as Helena Bonham Carter, and the audience can't ever know this, until the payoff at the end. So we needed a Victorian house that would have had servants' entrances to every room so that there were two entrances

and exits in every room and the back stairs conversion was there so that there was a second stairway that they could use. All of those production design choices made possible the kind of French farce that was going on in the film.

Through the world-building classes I am teaching at USC, we are also developing an experimental world that is really looking at the notions of multiple authorship and what happens if you bring a really large array of expert authors to the table. And in this case it is really becoming less and less to do with World Building as a kind of foundational design practice and more about the notion of authorship itself. The graduate class we are teaching is cross-divisional so we have production students, designers, filmmakers, writers, games students, students for the IMAP program, students from the School of Architecture and from the School of Engineering, so there are lots of experts in the room—sixteen to eighteen students—all tasked to gather around a single world. The classes' first instructions were to learn Rio and LA deeply enough that you could combine their core DNA to create a new city and then place that new city on an island. The premise is that the city has grown too fast for the land-mass it occupies. These 18 plus students have spent a semester looking at this problem, along with another sixteen undergraduates from another class, plus a group in the architecture school which is looking purely at the architecture of this world, and another group at the Royal College of Art in London. So at the moment, about 60 students are gathering around the single world and every contribution that is being made is either being challenged or is fortifying the core logic of the world. And now for the second part of the semester—and in the Royal College group—all of the students are encouraged to extract specific projects from the world. So 60 narratives have sprung out of this fer-

tile world build: they are enormously varied because the world is rich enough that you can take what you want. Some of them were architects and were just looking at the questions that they would ask from their practice. But we also have sound based projects, we have a geo-catching project, we have an Occulus Rift project being developed. There are several films—looking at gender identity, looking at school
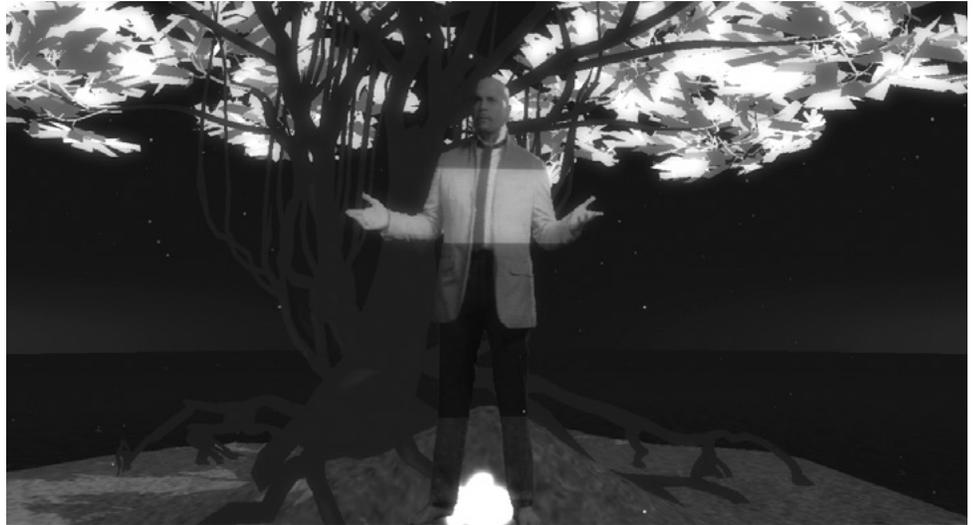
RILAO: The Lao Chapters, a VR experience. Design and story by Bryan Edelman, Eric Adrian Marshall, Chris Cain, Ascot Smith. VR programming by Bryan Edelman.

playgrounds based on political systems, food, terror forming cybernetics, and cyber-extensions of the human body, anxiety. There's a whole project going on based on the idea that a plague had evolved in the 1920's in this world. So layers and layers of story have come out and what is interesting to me is that we have just created the conditions within which a set of authors can collaborate with none of the normal drivers on the story to say that this is the outcome we want to reach. We are purely seeding the stories and allowing them to evolve organically and let's see where they go. It's a persistent world and it is an experiment in motion, but it appears to be capable of producing very robust answers to whatever questions we have asked of it.

HJ: What you are describing is radically different from the way most of the educators reading

this Journal are going to think about how to teach creative writing. The focus is always on individual voice, on personal expression, each person doing his or her own work, cut off from each other. So we have to imagine bringing this down to elementary or high school level, we have to reimagine from ground up really what it is to teach creativity or teach design in a school setting. Can you walk us through how you integrate these students into this process? What does it look like to walk in the first day of class? What assumptions do they carry, what do you have to do to break those down?

AM: Well, you start from common interest. So you can scale this down to the size of the classroom itself if you like, but certainly you could scale it to

RILAO: Tetraforming. 3D game design and story by Evangelos Pantazis

the size of the community around the school, or the town. You could imagine just saying to students to bring one experience from the past week. Share something that has occurred within the last week that tells us about your family relationships. And then you bring all those stories to the front and ask what's the common thread here: where do they all take place? When did they all take place? What is specific about the environment you are describing? Let's look at that world through the lens of religion

—what religions are practiced in these different homes? Lets look through the lens of age or the hierarchy of the family. I am just making this up. But then you could say, well could you imagine transposing that same event back to your parents' generation? Go back and do research. What would happen if that same thing had happened to your parents as children or to their grandparents? And then you are starting to wind back through history and you can really start tracking social change very quickly. What conditions have changed, not only for the individual but also for the larger culture around them? All of these become a set of foundational rules, a context for the world you are building, a world that has to accommodate these conditions. So, let's imagine what would happen to a series of families over ten years time. We are going to use all of this research that is about the past and present and then speculate about how families might behave in say five or six different communities in the future. We are going to be pulling together information and research from all of the student's personal stories to get them to think more deeply about conditions they don't know and apply logic to figure that out. And this construct can then inspire stories. If the world being developed is strong and based on a specific network of powerful logic threads, that forces all of the participants to pay attention to each other and to the drivers that define their relationship to that world. For our students, it's a much more effective way to prepare them for the world as creators. When they go out into the world, they are going to be interacting with a lot of different creative people in a way that is very different from how, say, creative writing is commonly practiced in school. Film schools sometimes have small group projects, involving three or four students, but they are not doing the kinds of large collaborations we find ourselves doing in the real world film or game

industries. There's something really powerful about having a group of people, each experts in their own field, sitting around a table, learning about the world together, and negotiating that space to generate new insights and new narratives.

HJ: Many of the concepts we are batting around here are ones that will resonate with teachers—multidisciplinarity, systems thinking, collaborative problem-solving, research. Schools have struggled for some time around how to get students to connect things they learned in one class to what they are learning in another class. World-building activities like the ones you just described seem like a way to achieve these goals organically—bring everything you each know to the table and try to think holistically about a society, a place, a time, a group of people, their customs, their beliefs.

AM: Yes, world-building is an incredibly powerful practice—and we have proven this over and over again—if nothing else, in its precognitive ability to extrapolate forward to possible futures. The thing that was unique to me in my experiences around *Minority Report* that can be put into practice, on any level or at any scale, at any age, is the notion of informed thinking, let's say. So, first of all, you consider the collaborative group all to be experts in one or more fields, so you each come from a different discipline, a different background, and you know more about one aspect of this culture than everybody else in the room. For *Minority Report,* we were going to experts in such a broad range of fields that we were way outside our normal film silo comfort zone. We were speaking with DARPA about non-lethal weaponry, we were consulting urban planners, we were going to car manufacturers, we were listening to educators and people thinking about health, about music. All of these factors bring knowledge to bear on the world and they are all essential elements of the world. You can use these as filters. If you were only to examine a world through a lens of music, you would nevertheless go deeply into culture, into repression, and the way that music has formed out of slave cultures, out of oppressed so-

ciety, into how music has been used to forge rebellion. The inference is that music reflects a culture, whether it is a surf culture, or whether it's Capoeira, a fighting dance style, or whether it is a carnival in the way that it fundamentally represents different sectors of the society. So, with any one starting lens you start a process of analysis and examination into the cultural conditions of the world that leads you holistically and organically into all of these other different spaces. It is essentially about having that curiosity and willingness for open-minded questioning, 'What if, why not?'

HJ: My team here at USC has been doing work with civics education using this idea of world building. We have done workshops now at a Mosque in LA and at a Freedom School for undocumented youth at UCLA, and most recently, through the Digital Media and Learning conferences. We start by asking participants to imagine a world that is radically different from our own. Often we ask them to think about a world without borders as a starting prompt and to imagine that world about 40 years into the future. Together, we brainstorm the perimeters of the world. We try to quickly map out political concerns, technological change, transportation systems, communication practices, even food often turns out to be a tangible way to get people thinking about what it would be like to live in the future. And then we have people break off in groups and tell stories that emerge from that world. In the end, we've done things like producing a newscast, which is a natural format for combining stories of different parts of the world and creating a reality together. And if we think this world represents a better society, how did we get there? What is needed to change in order for society to realize these potential goods? And that is something one could do without a lot of high tech. It is a brain storming practice, it is a story telling practice. The outcome for us could be as simple as a skit or as elaborate as a short video but it is not about building anything as complex as what you have done in Leviathan, but it is a way teachers can incorporate these world building skills into an everyday class room activity.

AM: I absolutely agree. The Rilao project is not actually technologically elaborate. Certain students have been able to do elaborate projects within it using Occulus Rift and the Unity game engine, etc, but at its basic level, it is really a series of texts and images that are accumulating out of the shared knowledge of the group. I think the low tech component is important. I want to stress that this approach is about changing the way we think and the way we use our imagination as a kind of force. And this is fundamentally about storytelling. Storytelling is that core relational practice that comes from the known world around us and sharing stories as ways of helping us to find the unknown, if you like.

The core practice we have to teach is fundamentally about curiosity—in being interested enough in the world to go deeply into the investigation that is required. We do this as a regular exercise with Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, each one of which is metaphorically described in a single page, and students can run a whole semester on just working through where these descriptions take them if they choose. This is incredibly fertile ground.

HJ: I have done similar things with Alan Lightman's *Einstein's Dreams* which is another one of those books which has 4-5 page long pieces, each of which describes a different world and identifies the consequences of the differences in that world. It's a great springboard for classroom activities. I have had media students take a world and figure out what media would look like in that world and that can generate several class periods of discussion.

One of the negative consequences of our current era of standardized testing is that schools are treating the real world as if it were a shallow surface on which we have five items of this and ten items of that which we can memorize and test students on and then that's the end of it. We are skimming along the surface of our world, where-as, in relation to entertainment, people are being encouraged to drill deeper and deeper into these vast narratives and rich worlds. James Paul Gee makes the point that the system of Pokemon is far more complex than the periodic table: 250 plus species, each with their dif-

ferent antagonisms, friendships, powers, histories. If you really mastered Pokemon, you've done something far more sophisticated than what schools care about: there's a reluctance to ask kids to learn twelve Greek gods, for heaven's sake.

We are used to critiquing pop culture for dumbing down and in fact it may be demanding far more than schools are allowed to demand of their students anymore. And certainly in some ways it is allowing us to follow our passions as deeply as we can take them. That is the work the school librarian used to play—to help students pursue their interests in all directions. And now many schools have got rid of school librarians so there is not someone there, a mentor or coach who is helping kids find pathways through which to pursue their curiosities. Online communities around rich fictional works may do a lot of their work.

AM: Absolutely. It's incredibly inverted: the more and more Minecraft gets richer and richer the more the classrooms get shallower and shallower. ✼

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE PROJECTS REFERENCED HERE:

Leviathan—http://thecreatorsproject.vice.com/blog/leviathan-the-future-of-storytelling

Rilao http://5dinstitute.org/

For the Media, Activism, and Participatory Politics world building workshop, Neta Kligler-Vilenchik, "'Think Critically, Act Civically': A Workshop on the Civic Imagination," Confessions of an Aca-Fan, March 25 2014, http://civicpaths.uscannenberg.org/2014/03/think-critically-act-creatively-a-workshop-on-civic-imagination/

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Johnson, Derek (2013) Media Franchising: Creative License and Collaboration in the Culture Industries (New York: New York University Press).

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In the future…
The future of media literacy education

by Neil Andersen

Neil is the president of the Association for Media Literacy (Ontario), a charitable organization that promotes and supports media literacy in the workplace, at home and in school. He has given entertaining and informative presentations to hundreds across Canada, in the US, Asia (Japan, India and China), Australia and Europe. Neil has taught media studies for over 30 years. He has been a computer resource teacher and a literacy consultant. He has taught at the University of Toronto, York University and at Mount Saint Vincent University. He is on the editorial board of *The Journal of Media Literacy* and on the Education Committee of Media Smarts. He has made movies and videos, authored student textbooks, teacher resource books, over 200 study guides, and designed posters, books, websites, and programs. His awards include the Jessie McCanse Award (National Telemedia Council) and The Magic Lantern Award (The Association for Media and Technology in Education).
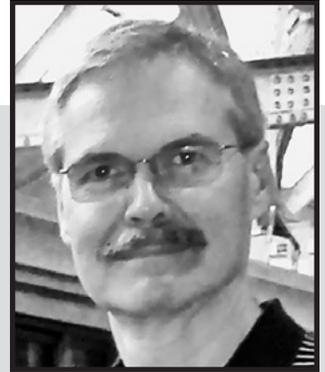
Answers to the question, 'What is the future of media literacy education?' are probably as knotty and complex as the future of media themselves. Both the certainties and uncertainties are compelling and subject to the vagaries of technological advances, marketing, policy and societal responses.

It seems certain, for example, that a greater proportion of the world's population will acquire connectivity and ultimately access and voice. The connectivity will not be just person-to-person, but person-to-group and person-to-cloud. The trickle-down effect of smart phones into the hands of younger children will continue until most North American students will have high-speed connectivity. Budget limitations and hardware obsolescence will further encourage schools to adopt bring-your-own-device policies, accompanied by a plethora of malware threats, compatibility snags and classroom management challenges. Corporations will continue their efforts to be a part of—and profit from—the education landscape. Societal crises involving surveillance, bullying, obesity, and mature themes ("Click here if you are over 17 years of age.") will intensify.

Boy, ain't we got fun!

The ever-increasing proliferation and ubiquity of mediated technologies and media experiences make media literacy education more important every year. What was once important is now critical. Just as the variety and extent of media experiences have become epidemic, so too must media literacy education become epidemic. During the period of mass media, media literacy and media literacy education emphasized reading and understanding mass media communications. People were mostly consumers excepting the few who became professional media producers.

Today, and certainly into the forseeable future, we are consumers PLUS producers, or what some call prosumers. As emails, photos, Tweets and texts are media texts, we all create media—and often—both professionally and personally. Knowing how to

effectively create and distribute media messages is no longer the purview of a few professionals, but a skill required of everyone in our mediated society. It is also a skill requirement for employment. Media literacy provides people the skills to be more effective workers, citizens, parents and friends. Of equal importance, media literacy helps us to understand and enjoy our lives more completely.

Because of these and other complexities and urgencies, I would like to examine the question of media literacy education's future as a confluence of multiple perspectives: **technological, educational and sociological**. These are educated guestimates that will be re-examined in years to come for their prescience, naïveté, misinterpretations and/or shortsightedness. Please feel welcome to respond to each with 'hmmm…' 'bah!' 'meh,' or 'woa!' May they provoke useful thought and discussion.

I. Technological Influences On The Future Of Media Literacy Education

Whether hardware and software limitations (proxy servers, key-word filters, selective website blocking) continue to be exercised by authorities remains to be seen, but these will likely be unsuccessful. Parents will persevere, but only succeed marginally in home environments. Schools will persevere, but only succeed marginally in school environments. Students will do what they have always done: continue to find and interact in the many interstitial spaces they will understandably seek to achieve privacy and community. Extra-curricular learning (e.g., YouTube, social media) will become more common as school rules make institutional education increasingly oppressive, irrelevant and/or incomplete.

Youtube—or a descendant—will become an even more major resource, if not a school unto itself. Even now, it is hard to imagine a process for which *Youtube* does NOT provide at least one how-to video. *Youtube* is one of Google's *Google Apps for Education*, a lead-in to *Google Apps for Business*. These suites of free online software will be friendly learning and business environments and nearly cradle-to-grave companions.

Facebook—or a descendant—will continue as an extension of people's personal lives. Whether *Facebook* will become an essential component of students' school lives remains to be seen. *Facebook's* premise is that users connect with those with whom they WANT to connect—friends; whereas the classroom premise is that students connect with people in common educational activities, i.e., acquaintances-with-common-goals rather than friends. Many students resist using *Facebook*, their preferred social platform, for educational purposes in an effort to separate sought-after relationships from forced ones. A separate platform, or perhaps an educational subsection of *Facebook* that provides discrete collaboration, will likely develop to provide students with social learning spaces that do not impinge on their personal lives. Perhaps *Google Group*s could provide students with an academic-social platform similar to the alternative professional-social platform that *LinkedIn* provides professionals.

Wearable technologies

Currently, teachers are challenged by students whose attention is drawn by the smart phones they hide on their laps. Their gaze gives them away. What will happen to classroom control when the smart phone has morphed into a pair of glasses that students can use to communicate with one another or blink to shoot at augmented reality aliens hanging from the classroom ceiling? Teacher-centred classrooms will be especially at risk when such covert distractions compete for students' attention. Discussions of school rules will have to be replaced by students' responsibilities to their own educational goals. Self-discipline, also the preferred format in the managerless workplace, will need to be formally addressed. These discussions will be informed by media literacy.

The Internet of things

Internet-capable items include home appliances but will soon include all televisions and other school appliances that might need regulation or maintenance, like projectors, heating units, printers, etc. Just as clocks have become automatic attributes of comput-

ing-related devices, cameras and microphones are being inserted into appliances. What awareness and circumspection will students have to exercise when many of the devices they use daily are capable not only of surveilling their activities and talk, but of communicating recorded events within and beyond the school walls? If students might be surveilled by screens and other appliances at home and at school, and the data is being archived for forensic search at a later date, how might these conditions influence their thoughts and behaviors and what kinds of media literacy might they need to develop? How might these technological innovations change relationships between students, their teachers and the school administration as well as between children and their parents? And if children can be surveilled by their parents, it is equally—if not more likely—for parents to be surveilled by their children, who are usually more technically capable. What are the chances and ramifications of a school board's or home's surveillance archives being hacked? Laptops, tablets and smart phones have cameras and microphones. They are not, however, under the exclusive control of their owners. They can be turned on and off remotely and without detection. That means that students are carrying personal surveillance devices wherever and whenever they go. What media literacy awareness and strategies will students need to exercise under these conditions? What meaningful and important conversations will need to occur between teachers and students, parents and children? What media literacy awareness and strategies might teachers need when all of their interactions—with students, peers, administration, parents—are potentially recorded and archived by their own devices?

Face and voice recognition

Passwords will be replaced by face and voice recognition. We will be asked to look into a camera and read a line on the screen, then granted access to programs and files based on the results. This procedure might address issues of identity theft for governments, banks and retail sales, but will also have implications for school attendance and file ownership. Students might file into class past a computer that

identifies them by face and voice, then sends the results to an attendance database. Were they there? Were they late? Did they go to the washroom and not return? Did they hand in an assignment?

Proxy servers and filters

Many school boards employ proxy servers and filters in an attempt to limit students' exposure to specific information. Pornography is probably the best example of such filtering, but it is a longer list. These efforts reflect the fears and anxieties of supervising adults more than they do real dangers to students. Be that as it may, bring-your-own-device and more affordable data plans will obsolesce if not confound filtering services. When students' unencumbered devices are speaking to towers beyond the school walls, proxy and filtering servers are irrelevant. Media literacy, which in this case may be the awareness of the intents and potential effects of antisocial or otherwise harmful information, is the only reasonable response. Physical or software restraints must be replaced by media literacies' knowledge and skills.

II. Sociological Influences On The Future Of Media Literacy Education

Teacher-centred/student-centred continuum

Students with wireless devices and online access are often accustomed to—and comfortable with—autonomous learning activities. These might range from homework assignments to the independent learning that occurs when they acquire a new game, hobby or piece of technology. These people are accustomed to formulating their own inquiry questions, research strategies, data access and processing. They will bring these skills and expectations to classrooms and wise teachers will provide them with learning opportunities and support to capitalize on and refine their skills. Otherwise, teachers may find themselves in power struggles trying to limit these students' activities. The results of these conflicts may result in frustrated students and teachers, wasted learning opportunities and increased student

disaffection with school. Smart teachers will form co-learner relationships with their students, sharing strategies and knowledge for mutual gain.

Power and responsibility

Rapidly-obsolescing smartphones are not being retired. They're being handed down from parent to child or older to younger sibling. What was once the purview of adults is rapidly becoming that of children. With smartphones, recording, editing and sharing information is literally child's play. But with power comes responsibility. Where, when and how will younger students learn to reflect upon and exercise ethical behaviors if not through media literacy education? The challenges to parents and teachers will be considerable and they will need both the perspective and strategies that media literacy provides.

Some organizations recommend little or no

> *"Smart teachers will form co-learner relationships with their students, sharing strategies and knowledge for mutual gain."*

screen time for toddlers and limited screen time for children. Right or wrong, these recommendations are unrealistic and will be largely ignored. Today's parents grew up with table-top screens and use portable screens continuously. Like it or not, screens are as naturalized in North Americans' lives as pets and refrigerators. As such, thoughtful media literacy strategies will be developed by parents so that they can strike a healthy balance between screen-related and other activities.

Surveillance & Privacy

The *Five Eyes* (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States) surveillance industry will continue and ultimately be joined by business, education and some well-meaning parents. While there may or may not be a cooling of anti-government activities as a result of heavy sur-

veillance, there will be a definite chill in self-expression. People—and especially students who might benefit from experimenting with alternative music, lifestyles, language, and/or identities—will be careful to do so in private spaces, if at all. Discouraging students' experimentation and dissent—key aspects of childhood development—will discourage their learning. Students, as always, will develop strategies to maintain their privacy while enjoying their social connections (see *It's Complicated*, by danah boyd). If they are creative and experimental, they might find clandestine spaces for their self-expression, or they alternatively might have to label their expressions as *'experimental,' 'role-plays,' 'parodies,' 'jokes,'* etc. There are already too many instances where students' experimental or humorous expressions have been misunderstood and led to knee-jerk and traumatic censorship.

Corporatizing

There has been a gradual but steady corporatizing process that now implicates all online organizations and individuals. First corporations established websites, followed by governments and related organizations, especially school boards and schools. With *Facebook*, *Tumblr*, blogging and *Twitter* feeds, individuals have significant web presences. Each of these presences has followed a similar pattern. The web presence has been used to represent and communicate a brand. Branding may have been second nature to corporations, but was new and challenging for schools and individuals. Now students have become their own brand managers, using their *Facebook*, *Tumblr* pages, *Snapchat* posts, *Vines* and *Twitter* streams to establish and define their online personalities. Along with our web presence has come the economy of eyeballs. *Facebook's* 'likes' and 'tags,' *YouTube's* 'comments,' Tumblr's 'comments', 'reblogs,' and 'likes,' or *Twitter's* 'retweets,' 'followers' and 'favorites' have become the currency used to measure popularity and influence. Media literacy education will have to provide strategies to help students understand, appreciate, navigate and cultivate their personal branding. It will have to help them recognize and determine what kinds of corporatiz-

ing they are achieving, and if they want to be corporatized at all.

Net neutrality

Net neutrality will continue to be an ongoing concern and will demand media literate responses. Corporations that own both content (sports franchises, entertainment studios) as well as delivery mechanisms (cable, satellite, fibre optic) will understandably be tempted to privilege the display and delivery of their own content over that of competitors. Government and consumer oversight will be required to maintain equal access and net neutrality, which will be monitored by consumers because it will become a regular topic of media literacy education.

Access to information and experts and artists

How often will a renowned academic, artist or scientist be willing to have online discussions with a student or class before their own productivity suffers and they have to decline invitations?

Awkward disconnects between school and online environments

I once spoke with a teacher who was one of the first to utilize electronic pen pals. A grade 4 class in Toronto had paired with a class in Italy. The introduction of email technology had had the teacher's desired effect and the students were very excited to write to the Italian students and read their responses. Because of the time zone differences between Italy and Toronto, the exchanges were taking place in one anothers' night. The Toronto students' emails appeared in the Italian students' inboxes during the night and were there for them to read and respond to at the beginning of their school day. Likewise, the Italian students' responses were waiting for the Toronto students when they arrived at school each day. I thought all of this was very exciting (authentic audiences, rapid feedback) and was very disappointed when the teacher told me that they had shut down the communication. The teachers were finding it impossible to address other portions of the curriculum because all of the students' excitement and enthusiasm was directed toward their email conver-

sations. This is not the first time that a good application of media technology became the victim of its own success.

Wireless technologies respect neither temporal nor geographical boundaries. Their uses may unfortunately create situations where teachers cannot imagine responses other than to shut them down. Media literacy discussions, however, might help them to imagine and negotiate strategies that facilitate and maximize learning. The curricular weaknesses will become apparent in one of two ways. Particularly successful and exciting mediated learning may highlight—by contrast—other areas of the curriculum where learning is not exciting, possibly as a result of less student-centered, constructivist or inquiry learning. Noting and responding to these contrasts may help teachers modify and increase the success of these 'other' classroom activities. The other problem that might appear will be in instances where mediated learning is so exciting that it seems to distort the curriculum. Where a media production activity—for example a video—appears to require more time than a teacher is comfortable with allocating because of other curricular demands, additional learning goals—reading, writing, research, group, speaking—might be added to the assessment to rationalize the time commitment.

News

Many people are concerned about apparent youth disinterest in news. I say 'apparent' because there is no youth disinterest in news. There is, however, a difference in what constitutes news for many youth and what people do with news. Many youth are quite disinterested in political and corporate news, which they see as having little to do with their day-to-day lives. They believe this news occurs in remote locations and affects the lives of others. They are very interested, however, in news that directly connects with their interests and activities. A great deal of the time and energy spent on *Twitter* and *Facebook* involves the production and consumption of news. Media literacy can help both students and teachers better understand what constitutes news as well as appropriate responses to it. Media literacy

education will develop to include a broader range of news definitions and responses. It will also help students understand that some political, economic and scientific news is very worthy of their attention and action.

Copyright and remix culture

Notions of copyright and intellectual property are highly contested and central to the future of media literacy education. On the one hand, many commercial media producers expend great energy in—usually futilely—trying to maintain proprietary control of information. The music, television and movie industries are prime examples of such efforts. On the other hand, there are *YouTube* and a few other popular culture sites that are constantly celebrating remixes, often of the same cultural texts that the commercial media producers are trying to control. Media literacy education finds itself squarely in the middle of these conflicting ideological responses to copyright because students are either reading and responding to the copyrighted and remixed texts, or they are enthusiastically participating in the remix culture with their own parody or tribute texts. Teachers often caution or prohibit students from using copyrighted music in the soundtracks of their videos, efforts that are both enervating and discouraging.

Media literacy education will continue to be an intellectual property site of struggle as long as these forces oppose one another. Hopefully—as a result of copyright holders' media literacy education—copyright holders will come to realize that parodies and tributes are free promotions and voluntary marketing for their products. If and when this occurs, the self-censorship that excludes students from cultural expression and participation will no longer be needed and at least one form of oppression will be removed from the school environment.

Social media—social and academic spaces

Schools will learn that many students prefer to keep their personal lives and educational lives separate in online spaces. That means that they will resist using their personal social media spaces, e.g., *Facebook*

pages, as platforms for collaborative schoolwork. They will prefer—and will be provided—online spaces that are exclusively designed for educational activites. Just as many working adults represent themselves and perform differently in their working spaces and relationships than in their personal relationships and spaces, students will learn more effectively if provided social media spaces that are dedicated to social learning activities. These spaces could be alternate *Facebook* pages or spaces on entirely separate platforms, e.g., *Google Apps for Education.*

III. Educational Influences On The Future Of Media Literacy Education

Brain and learning theory

This is a wonderful time to be a teacher. Research into brain and learning theory has provided teachers with profound insights into the best ways of delivering curriculum and helping students retain knowledge. We know that students' attention spans have limited duration, and that learning tasks need to fit that limitation. This also means that mini-lessons targeted to specific learning needs/goals can be strategically delivered. We know that students are more engaged in their creations if there is an authentic context and audience for their learning as compared to a hypothetical one. We know that students retain knowledge and information better when they manipulate it, so active learning and student engagement are powerful. We know that students learn in a variety of styles, so that curriculum that differentiates learning is more successful. We know that the brain internalizes models of how the world is organized and activated, so teaching that addresses students' mental schema is more successful. We know that inquiry-based learning is powerful because it addresses and is driven by students' own curiosity, learning styles and pacing. We know that situated learning—or the social context and conditions in which learning occurs—influences the quality of learning, so teachers can find ways of using social interactions to enhance learning.

Since media communications—video, info-

graphics, podcasts, architecture, clothing, videoconferences, textbooks, packaging, tweets—are implicated in all learning activities, each of these insights potentially informs and enhances media literacy learning. When reading or consuming media, students can consider effective uses of codes and conventions as well as appropriate platforms and formats. They can also reflect on how well the media forms have supported their learning. When creating their own media texts, students consolidate their learning and refine the most effective ways to demonstrate/communicate it. They can then reflect on the wisdom and degree of success of their chosen media form as well as the quality of their content learning.

These insights and accomplishments, however, are only possible if teachers are aware of and provide the contexts for their success. Integrating media literacy learning with other content and skills is preferred because it sends the very important message that media literacy underpins teaching and learning as well as extracurricular communications.

The flipped classroom and mediated experiences will collude to re-define classrooms. Media experiences—often in online environments—will be the homework, while classrooms will be the social spaces in which the information is processed into knowledge.

Media literacy and information literacy

Media literacy and information literacy will continue their tango, struggling to see who will lead and who will follow. Information literacy hails from library science and is promoted as equally important as media literacy by those with library science histories. While information literacy is an essential skill, it is neither as important nor as sophisticated as media literacy. Information literacy is predicated on the notion that there are varying qualities (e.g., comprehensive, accurate, current, bias-free) of sources of information. Media literacy engages all sources of information, seeing those that are authenticated and those that are not as equally significant. In fact, spurious and suspect sources are often more interesting as media texts and essential to media studies. While

a large part of the information literacy vocabulary involves database navigation, media literacy extends the queries to include *why* some information is privileged over other information, or *why* some groups might prefer one version over another. Information literacy asks, 'Which information is accessible and the most reliable?' Media Literacy asks, 'Who sez? And why? And what might this tell us about the creators and audience?'

Home and school

The ubiquity of media use is greater at home than at school. Screen time is approaching double digits per day. Media literacy can no longer be the responsibility of teachers alone. Home and school collaborations will be required to fully support students and children as they learn the effective and responsible uses of their many devices. This means constant, candid and informed conversations between parents, teachers and students, all of whom will be comfortable with media literacy language and concepts.

Situated learning

A major educational research insight is that learning is very social. *Situated learning* acknowledges that the conditions of learning are as important as the content, and often influence the quality of learning in profound ways. Media literacy is perfectly positioned to support situational learning, through both production and social media. If students are asked

> *"This is a wonderful time to be a teacher."*

to demonstrate their learning through the production of a media text, they will have to conduct research and/or experimentation to identify, select and prioritize their learning. Because their media text will be shared, they must consider appropriate format, genre and audience address. Not only does media production help students to consolidate, but the fact that most productions are created in

groups also supports co-learning and developing group participation. This will become a classic case of teaching THROUGH and ABOUT media because—whatever the content— students will have to exercise their media literacy as they produce their media texts. Social media can also support situat-

> *"Media literacy can no longer be the responsibility of teachers alone. Home and school collaborations will be required to fully support students and children as they learn the effective and responsible uses of their many devices. This means constant, candid and informed conversations between parents, teachers and students, all of whom will be comfortable with media literacy language and concepts."*

ed learning. Students might be working in a virtual school environment, where their communications are exclusively online and will require facility in online communications, research and online-appropriate collaborative group skills. In cases where one classroom teams up with other classrooms remotely, media literacy will need to be a constant discussion topic as groups learn how to interact, share knowledge, and collaborate across cultures to produce a common product.

Media literacy education and standardized testing

There is a risk of media literacy being simplified through inclusion in standardized tests. However, there is a risk of it being ignored because teachers are instructed to teach 'what counts.' At some point,

one brave/foolish jurisdiction will include a media literacy component in its standardized test, and the result will become a bellwether for other jurisdictions. The hazard lies in the fact that media literacy is a very complex skill set and the reductive processes of making it workable in a standardized test context may also remove its complexity and sophistication. For example, standardized tests are most often print-based, creating a print-bias for testable media texts—tweets, posters, ads, infographics, book covers, etc.—and excluding electronic texts—videos, podcasts, speeches, websites, music. The danger is that standardized test items may come to define media literacy in the curriculum. Time will tell how this bias might play out.

Teacher pre-service learning

In the future, all students will learn media literacy as a natural part of their schooling. Those who choose teaching as a profession will enter teacher training expecting to teach media literacy as a regular part of their professional work. They will expect faculties of education to provide instruction in ineffective media literacy teaching strategies. In response, faculties will include media literacy teaching strategies in every pre-service teacher's learning. ;-)

Integrated or discrete?

There is extreme pressure on teachers as a result of multiple learning goals. This pressure encourages teachers to integrate strategies and outcomes wherever possible. Media literacy can be effectively integrated into most curricula. However, a lack of training and experience means that identifying and assessing media literacy learning in integrated student tasks requires a sophistication that is beyond many teachers. The results might again be simplification of complex curriculum goals.

Activism

Activism is an important and common aspect of media literacy education. In fact, it is impossible to become truly media literate without executing some form of activism, if only the assertion of personal rights or making choices based on ideological or

commercial considerations. Social activism however, is neither a main goal nor central to media literacy education. Media literacy education SHOULD be transformative, but on a personal level. It is then up to the individual student to decide whether to actively influence others or to live her/his own media literate life. Insisting that social activism is essential to media literacy is dogma and disrespects students' rights.

Identity crisis

Media literacy will continue to suffer from its ongoing identity crisis. *Media literacy* is a term descended from the early 20th century. Later academic factions have tried to supplant it with trendier terms: *new media literacy, transmedia literacy, digital literacy, information literacy, digital citizenship*. Each of these is an attempt to define a new discipline and academic domain, but does not help to convince people of the critical need for the skill. Finding a common term and definition will free up some of the energy wasted on in-fighting among academic domains to more successfully promote and explain the skill set.

Defining by doing

As David Buckingham suggests, media literacy is ultimately defined by those who teach it. The choices of topics, guided analyses, ideologies and judgments inherent in teachers' questions will determine what their students learn about and their attitudes toward media use. It is up to policymakers and educators, therefore, to decide if media literacy will be more fearful or hopeful: fearful of media effects, marketers and online predators; or hopeful of opportunities to learn more effectively, appreciate diverse points of view, and become more effective media users. Each position needs examination. I hope that we will think carefully, choose well and balance the equation.

I have considered the question of media literacy education's future as a confluence of multiple perspectives: **technological, sociological and educational.** The categories are mine, as are the characterizations. If I have omitted something important or something new that has just entered the conversation, please add it to your own cogitations.

What is important, however, is that media literacy education will evolve as a result of several external influences, few of which educators control. What makes media literacy exciting and imperative is that all of us—but especially teachers—have to remain vigilant, thoughtful, flexible and open to change, qualities that we hope will sustain our students. ❖

What makes media literacy exciting and imperative is that all of us—but especially teachers—have to remain vigilant, thoughtful, flexible and open to change, qualities that we hope will sustain our students.

Contemporary Voices in Media Literacy:
A Personal Credo for a Literate Global Society

by Tessa Jolls

Tessa Jolls is President and CEO of the Center for Media Literacy, a position she has held since 1999. She founded the Consortium for Media Literacy, a nonprofit which provides research and a monthly newsletter publication. During her tenure at CML, she has restructured the organization to focus, grow and change, preparing to meet the demand for an expanded vision of literacy for the 21st Century. Tessa was the 2013 co-recipient of NTC's Jessie McCanse Award.

Media literacy is a true passion for me—a cause that I can believe in, that is greater than myself and that contributes to the greater good. Why? Because media literacy means empowerment for individuals and for society; it provides a freedom and independence of mind, as well as an opportunity to create, to express and to participate with others in a respectful way. It provides the essential skills for being an engaged citizen in today's global village.

Media literacy offers a framework for critical analysis and for individual action that spans national boundaries, subject disciplines and ideologies. Through applying the Core Concepts and Key Questions of media literacy in a process of inquiry, it is possible to discern and to engage deeply with content and with other people. When I discovered the guidelines that the Core Concepts provide, I felt that I had found ideas as powerful as those of the 10 Commandments or the 12 Steps—timeless principles that give wide latitude while still providing a solid and credible foundation for learning and for thriving in today's media culture. In an increasingly networked world, the central ideas of media literacy education provide a way to integrate various disciplines to address and to take action on the pressing issues of the day—issues that span the world.

My current work takes place through two or-ganizations that I direct: the Center for Media Literacy, a for-profit education publisher that provides leadership, professional development and teaching materials (www.medialit.com) and the Consortium for Media Literacy, a nonprofit project of the Social and Environmental Entrepreneurs that focuses on research and on publication of a free monthly newsletter for the media literacy field (www.consortiumformedialiteracy.com).

Through the Center, our team offers a 1000+ page website that has a comprehensive Reading Room, with a history of media literacy education, as well as access to free materials and a Store that contains media literacy books, curricula and professional development materials. The website features the online archive for Media&Values Magazine, which was published by the Center under the leadership of our founder, Elizabeth Thoman (the Center was founded in 1989).

We have just published a new tobacco cessation curriculum called Smoke Detectors!, and we are in process in publishing a new curriculum that utilizes a production approach with interactive media in a team environment called Breakfast Epiphanies, with a theme of nutrition and media literacy. All of our curricula have been piloted and analyzed according to State Common Core Standards. The structure rests on a combination of our research-based frame-

work for media literacy (called Questions/TIPS), and the Empowerment Spiral of Awareness, Analysis, Reflection and Action. In 2013, a peer-reviewed journal publication of a UCLA longitudinal study of more than 1500 middle school students demonstrated that the Center's framework for media literacy is effective in improving student knowledge, attitudes and behavior. This evaluation also addressed the effectiveness of CML's revised curriculum Beyond Blame: Challenging Violence in the Media.

The publication of the UCLA evaluation results has inspired upcoming work for the Center, since it provides the basis for designing and implementing media literacy programs that are consistent, replicable, measurable and scalable. This type of approach is needed in an education environment that is global and that calls for greater efficiency and effectiveness in helping students become lifelong self-learners in a world where content is infinitely available. Such a goal allows for media literacy to become institutionalized—to be embedded in the fabric of everyday education, where media literacy is needed and where it belongs.

The Center's basic materials—Literacy for the 21st Century and Five Key Questions that Can Change the World—have been translated into Spanish, Arabic, Portuguese, and Turkish—a testimony to the world-wide interest in our research and development work through the years. As a pioneering media literacy organization, we have often set the pace for new ways of defining and implementing media literacy education. Our recently published Trilogy, called "A System for AnyTime, AnyWhere Learning," addresses Change Management, Deconstruction and Construction, with e-books, educator guides, planning and lesson worksheets, and powerpoint slides. Our YouTube Channel provides an array of videos that demonstrate teacher and student work.

We have dedicated ourselves to documenting media literacy basics so that educators and community organizers have a place to turn to in learning about what media literacy is, and how to design lesson plans and curricula. Through our MediaLit Kit™, media literacy practitioners have an "onramp" to media literacy that provides them with a solid foundation and easily-implemented lessons and tools. We have not only provided these published materials, but we have also implemented programs in p-K, elementary, middle and high school settings. We have documented our work through case studies, and we have evaluated our work. It is through this type of systematic implementation that teachers and students alike can gain the basic skills they need to increase their own media literacy and that of others.

All of this work has shown that media literacy should be at the center—rather than the periphery—of education, since students can acquire content knowledge through the process skills of media literacy in a way that gives them the skills for self-directed learning. In a world where media is ever present, these skills must be ever-present, as well.

This change in education priorities—from primarily teaching content to teaching students process skills—means changes in education practice and structures. For example, the role of school librarians is changing dramatically, with librarians shifting from being stewards of content to also becoming teachers of process as well as "chief information officers" of their schools, to whom principals and teachers may turn for recommendations and assistance in integrating and coordinating instructional programs. New pedagogies such as "flipped classrooms" and blended learning that combines online and classroom instruction are all reflections of what media literacy practitioners have long advocated: that teaching and learning should be student-centered and individualized, yet rigorous and challenging.

As we look ahead, it is clear that to move forward, the education world needs to catch up to media literacy and to make the foundations of media literacy an integral part of learning from a child's earliest days. **We are moving from a flat world of education,** with content silos supporting a linear plane of literacy with graduation as a finite goal, **to a many-dimensioned world** in which infinite content revolves around and enhances an evolving core of process skills and habits of mind that enrich a lifetime and impact others, that we call media literacy. Bring it on!! ❖

"Demystifying Media Literacy"

Robert W. McChesney
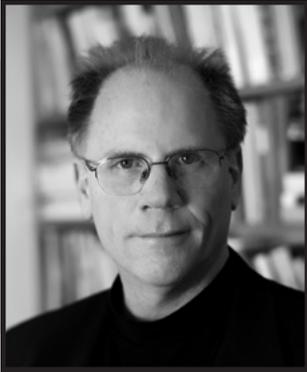
Robert W. McChesney is Gutgsell Endowed Professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. His two most recent books are *Digital Disconnect: How Capitalism is Turning the Internet Against Democracy* (New Press, 2013) and, with John Nichols, *Dollarocracy: How the Money-and-Media Election Complex is Destroying America* (Nation Books, 2013).

I am not a media literacy expert, per se. As a communication scholar who has emphasized history and political economy I have moved in media literacy circles, and that is how I have learned about it. Specifically, as one who has provided a critique of the media status quo, I have sometimes been asked about media literacy as a solution to the problems I chronicle.

My understanding of media literacy goes like this: Traditional education has emphasized literacy with the printed word and print cultures. Students learn to read and write, with all that entails, and that is much of education. With the ascension of electronic media, audio-visual based, to dominance, the education system must change as well. Students need to understand the techniques, biases and language of electronic media every bit as much as they understand print media. Electronic media need to be "demystified" and made understandable and accessible. Students can therefore be actors rather than dependent variables who are manipulated by unseen and often unknown forces. A rational democratic society would have media literacy instruction as a cornerstone of its education curriculum.

This makes perfect sense to me, and if this is what is meant by media literacy, sign me up. Moreover, if this vision of media literacy extends to a broader adult education and popular outreach, so much the better.

Standing on the outskirts of the field, I noticed a basic difference in orientation by those who engaged in media literacy. On the one hand, there were those who emphasized making people smarter and better consumers of commercial media fare, where the existence of the commercial media system was taken for granted as a benevolent and unchangeable force. In this perspective, the market accurately "gives the people what they want," so the key was to educate people so they would demand higher quality fare. The assumption was that the corporate media giants would gladly oblige if the masses were made less ignorant and started demanding higher quality programming. This type of media literacy was popular with the corporate media conglomerates—it absolved them of any real responsibility—and they occasionally helped bankroll such operations as part of their public relations programs.

On the other hand, another approach to media literacy emphasized the profit-driven, advertising-supported basis of much of the media system as being absolutely crucial to understanding the nature of media fare, and especially the limitations and problems with the content. This type of media literacy sought to lift the hood on the system, so to

speak, and educate students as to how the motor worked and who was sitting at the steering wheel and benefitting materially by the status quo. This approach to media literacy often suggested to produce better media content required much more than a change in consumers, it required a change in the media system. This approach to media literacy was decidedly unpopular with the corporate media conglomerates and they had no interest in encouraging such an approach.

I find the first approach to media literacy superficial at best and apologetic at worst. It provides no roadmap to a better media world, or a better world at all. It has accomplished little of value. I find the second approach intellectually honest and politically viable. Because my own research has emphasized the importance of government policies for establishing the nature of the media system, and the media system for shaping the type of content being produced, any effort to make our media culture significantly better requires changes in the logic of the system, and that means changes in core government policies.

Consider, for example, the role of advertising and commercialism in our media culture. Advertising is a powerful cultural force in its own right; Mark Crisipin Miller in my view is correct when he describes it as the most powerful and successful propaganda system in history. The influence extends far beyond the actual ads to all the surrounding content and now, on the Internet, it is permeating every aspect of our lives. Thanks to advertising, there has been the incessant pressure to eliminate any notion of personal privacy from our media experiences.

The first approach to media literacy would simply take this state of affairs as a given and then maybe alert students as to how they can better navigate the commercial waters to be better consumers. This strikes me as the proverbial piss in the ocean, and in this case going against a 100 mile-an-hour headwind. If we are truly concerned with the negative consequences of a commercially marinated media, it requires understanding where commercialism comes from and then enacting policies to lessen its influence. Media literacy, in my view, should be

central to that educational project. It is not about making better media consumers, but better and effective media citizens.

My work for the past decade has been to go beyond generating a critique of the status quo toward having informed citizens come together to force changes in media policies and the media system. It is why I co-founded the organization Free Press with Josh Silver and John Nichols in 2003. Maintaining local media ownership, providing for noncommercial broadcasting, keeping the Internet from becoming the private playpen of a handful of commercial monopolies and the NSA, stopping the commercial carpet-bombing of childhood, has been difficult. Free Press has squared off against some of the most powerful corporate lobbyists in the world. But it is putting media literacy into practice. It is taking the knowledge of a sustained critique and using that knowledge to not merely understand the world, but to change it.

My present work emphasizes two specific topics. First, the commercial model of journalism is dying, Advertising no longer needs to support journalism as it goes online, and there are far fewer paid

> *"The need for media literacy as a democratic force has never been greater."*

working journalists today than there were 25 years ago. Journalism is a classic public good and will require enlightened policies and subsidies to see that we have an uncensored, competitive and noncommercial news media. Fortunately this is an issue that was addressed from the beginning of American history with postal and printing subsidies so there is a rich tradition from which to draw. It is mission critical, because there is no way even a weak democracy can survive if there is no journalism.

Second, the entire fabric of our lives is now in jeopardy. From the utter corruption of our elections and governing system and environmental crises that

go unheeded and unaddressed to an economy that increasingly seems to have little use for much of the population and holds no apparent future, society is increasingly at an impasse. We need to have open discussion about how to build a more humane, sustainable and democratic political economy. In those debates, deliberations and conversations, how media systems are structured and the role of media play a central role. The need for media literacy as a democratic force has never been greater. ❖

Robert McChesney's acclaimed new book *Digital Disconnect* is a comprehensive political-economic critique of the Internet and the digital revolution. Digital Disconnect is written for the general public and is ideal for classroom use. In the book, he assesses:

- the secretive policy decisions that led the Internet to being a center of commerce and profit-making
- the rise of gigantic monopolistic firms like Apple, Amazon, Microsoft, and Google to complete dominance, and what this means going forward for our economics, politics and culture
- the crucial relationship between these gigantic firms and the surveillance work of the National Security Agency
- how surveillance is built into the commercial Internet, and how this is radically transforming advertising and commerce
- the dramatic decline in journalism and why the Internet will not solve the problem—and only make matters worse unless there is smart public spending on journalism
- how the digital economy is destroying more decent paying jobs than it is creating, and is therefore aggravating the great economic crisis facing the nation, and, especially, young people
- a series of proposals to address the problems highlighted in the book
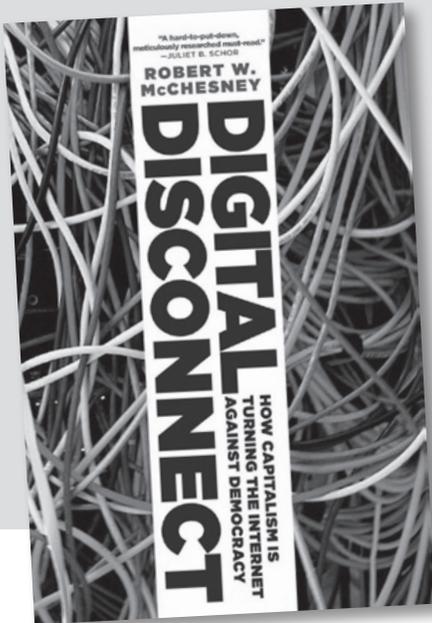
Critical Thinking About Media Messages

by Frank Baker

Frank W. Baker is a media literacy education consultant and the author of three books, including "Media Literacy In the K-12 Classroom" (ISTE, 2012). He contributed two chapters to the recently published "Mastering Media Literacy" (Solution Tree, December 2013). In November 2013, Frank was a co-recipient of the National Telemedia Council's Jessie McCanse Award given for individual contribution to the field of media literacy over at least 10 years. Follow him on Twitter @fbaker.

Media literacy philosophy and approach

I believe media literacy is at its core all about critical thinking. On my website, the Media Literacy Clearinghouse, I use the subhead: critical thinking about media messages. But to be honest, media literacy is so much more than just that. But critical thinking is a great starting point. Because I work primarily with K-12 schools, this fact resonates with all with whom I conduct professional development workshops. It also resonates with those organizations (e.g. Partnership for 21st Century Skills; Future Workskills 2020, K-12 Horizon Report, National Council of Teachers of English, etc.) which have either recognized, endorsed or recommended media literacy.

Many years ago I developed a three pronged approach to teaching media literacy:

1. Visual literacy- teaching how to look, analyze, deconstruct and understand how images can be read
2. Advertising literacy- analyzing print and nonprint messages in many forms
3. Moving image literacy: film and video

Current work

My work involves trying to elevate media literacy in both local, regional and national education conversations. First, I conduct regular professional development teacher training workshops at schools, school districts and conferences. Most recently, I have been called on by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Science (AMPAS) in Los Angeles to advise them on their media literacy institutes with LAUSD students and teachers. In that regard, I have conducted several day long film and media literacy workshops for the Academy.

I lecture regularly at the University of South Carolina's School of Library & Information Sciences.

(I really enjoy this undergraduate audience. One of the assignments I leave them with is a web site evaluation of the Media Literacy Clearinghouse)

I write a semi-regular column for MiddleWeb,(www.middleweb.com) a blog for middle level educators. This gives me an opportunity to look at the news or popular culture through a media literacy lens and write about how educators might incorporate both in the classroom.

I contribute to the English Companion ning (http://englishcompanion.ning.com/) as well as the Making Curriculum Pop ning (http://mcpopmb.ning.com/). I maintain the NCTE Media Blog (www.ncte-ama.blogspot.com). and my own Media

Literacy Clearinghouse website. (www.frankwbaker.com)

Changes coming in media literacy

I think the need for media literacy will continue to grow. As disinformation and misinformation run rampant, the calls for "media literate" consumers will continue to grow. The definition of media literacy has already expanded to include the various new media (e.g social media platforms) that are part of our 21st century world. It's exciting to see new software and apps being developed that can assist teachers and students in both analyzing and creating media messages. Today's students can write their own code and become programmers, just the same way they can pick up a camera and become today's

Yes many teachers teach with media, but not enough teach ABOUT it.

"broadcasters" or "publishers." But just shooting and uploading is not enough--these actions must be accompanied by training which includes understanding the rules, techniques, grammar and more.

My calendar continues to be full --with lots of demands locally, nationally and internationally.

In March and April 2014, I traveled to Mumbai India where I did media literacy work with parents, teachers and students at the American School of Mumbai. While there, I traveled to the northern states where I gave lectures at two universities.

What is needed

New teachers, coming out of the colleges of education, still are not receiving any media literacy education. That has to change, otherwise media literacy won't be taught.

When I review 21st century textbooks (even online versions) I see a great deal of inclusion of audio and video components, but that alone is not media literacy. Every text and every discipline needs

to include analysis and creation and other elements of media literacy.

When I present, inside school libraries, I take time to scan the bookshelves, where I am looking for books (for students and teachers) about the media. Unfortunately, I find very little. And that's a shame. There are many books published every year that would be appropriate for a school library media center collection, but I am not finding evidence of that. But the librarian can change that, by recognizing the shortfall in the collection and acquiring more titles.

Media literacy educators need to step up and demand that "the media" become part of a 21st century education. Yes many teachers teach with media, but not enough teach ABOUT it.

The new Common Core standards (CSS) actually do a dis-service to media literacy. The new ELA document for example is very heavily biased toward print. (The introduction to CCS makes references to the nonprint digital world of today but does little to put those words into action in the documents themselves.) Today's students still reside in a print centric world, even though their world is screen based. Our education system, in the US, continues to lag when it comes to providing teachers with the skills, knowledge, abilities and resources to be comfortable teaching media literacy.

The field has not done enough to promote media literacy education on the national stage. Having said that, I can applaud Tessa Jolls of the Center for Media Literacy because it was she alone who sat at the table when the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (www.p21.org) was deciding what skills tomorrow's students needed to know. So media literacy is part of the P21 curriculum skills maps. ✳

Trendspotting in Media Education

by Kathleen Tyner

Kathleen Tyner is Associate Professor in the Department of Radio-Television-Film in the College of Communications at the University of Texas at Austin and teaches courses in new media literacy, children and media, video games, virtual worlds, and research methods. She is a researcher with significant experience in the research, evaluation and development of new media, media arts, youth media and STEM projects and programs. Professor Tyner is author, co-author and editor of numerous books, articles and curricular materials related to media education, including *Media Literacy* (Routledge, 2009) and *Literacy in a Digital World: Teaching and Learning in the Age of Information* (Erlbaum, 1998). She is a member of the editorial boards and scientific committees for publications such as *The Journal of Community Engagement Through Digital and Media Literacy* (Queens University of Charlotte), Revista Communicar (Spain), and the *International Journal of Learning and Media* (Massachusetts Institute of Technology). Kathleen received NTC's Jessie McCanse Award in 2000.

Introduction

For decades, the discourse for media education was analogous to a broken record from the polyvinyl music era. As the pervasive use of digital communication devices becomes the "new normal," the dialogue is finally skipping past moribund debates about the aims, purposes, and definitions of media education.

A 2013 conference sponsored by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto addressed emerging trends in media education in its title: *The End of the Beginning of Media Literacy? The Next Generation.* This is not to say that debates about media education practices and purposes are resolved, but that innovative ideas about the role of media literacy in the community commons are invigorating media education.

The history of media literacy education in North America is deeply influenced by Canadian theories and practices since the last century. In particular, the work of Marshall McLuhan in the 1960s, followed by a second wave of media educators who convened at the University of Guelph Conference in Ontario in 1990, were essential components to the spread of media literacy in North America. The Aspen Institute Conference in the US in 1992, as well as theories and practices from the UK, also influenced the way that media literacy education in North America is conceived and practiced to this day (Duncan, 2010). These concepts from the last century focused on issues of reception and representation within the context of progressive pedagogies, critical cultural theories and political economies. In particular, McLuhan's ideas that form and content work together to produce meaning has come full circle as practitioners struggle to bridge a gap between media analysis and media production practices in the learning environment. This is further complicated by the rise of Big Data and related literacy skills, including research methods and coding, that are necessary to manage personal information in the digital afterlife and to make sense of information through data analysis and data visualization.

Some would say that the proliferation of digital tools, texts and practices makes media education even more diffuse. In fact, media literacy is simply

literacy, an historically complex subject. Increasingly, it is not necessary to distinguish media from other types of literacy. The word "literacy" will suffice since most people understand that literacy comes in many forms and involves much more than print. All involve the social capital associated with civic participation, personal fulfillment, academic achievement, workforce development, social status, and power.

Advocates have tried a number of strategies to explain, anchor and integrate media education into the existing formal education curriculum. These include lobbying for media education items in standards-based media education documents, opportunities for teacher professional development, and partnerships with youth media and youth development practitioners at the local level. Occa-

> *Media literacy is simply literacy, an historically complex subject. Increasingly, it is not necessary to distinguish media from other types of literacy. The word "literacy" will suffice.*

sional conferences and online activities that build networks and share resources also contribute to integration and field building. Integration strategies also include participation in government and policy forums about children's uses of media in formal, informal and cultural institutions such as museums and libraries, as well as forums related to educational reform. All of these strategies are viable and still useful to spread innovation and best practices to a broader community of advocates and practitioners.

Nonetheless, efforts for widespread integration of media education into public schooling remain ephemeral and arbitrary. Although advocates use a wide range of divergent terms and definitions to describe the aims and purposes of media literacy, this confusion in terminology does not seem to be the primary barrier to integration. It can be said that

broadly speaking, the public seems convinced that media and information literacy is essential to learning in a digital world.

In spite of promising efforts in the field, one of the problems with widespread implementation for media education is that mobilization and sustainability requires the kind of systems thinking that connects the public education sector to wider social practices. Just as electricity, light bulbs, automobiles and industrial farming technologies reshaped social, environmental, cultural and economic systems in surprising ways, digital communication systems reflect, connect and align with a wider array of related institutions, sometimes in suprising ways.

As a result, the problem with wide scale integration of media education reflects a bigger systemic problem. Its implementation is directly challenged by a defensive system of free public education that is in transition, if not in disarray. Debates about the role and purposes of public education call into question its traditional practices, but also its future directions at every level—from kindergarten to higher education. These debates have become increasingly confusing and contentious for the general public. In the context of debates about the school system's uses of standardized testing, accountability to taxpayers, curricular content, and teacher autonomy, the integration of media education does not appear to be an urgent action item and adds just another topic to an increasingly tiresome school reform debate. These conversations have spread to other cultural institutions with public education agendas, such as libraries and museums.

Granted, the dominance of standardized tests in public schools is a major stumbling block for innovation in any concept of free public education. Based upon models of efficiency and neo-liberal ideas of accountability, these tests are directly tied to funding, educational quality and political accountability. Like vampires, standardized tests suck all of the joy out of education and are not likely to die any time soon. In practice, the rise of multiple-choice, standardized testing in the United States is a significant barrier to both critical thinking and hands-on production in the learning environment. Although

powerful pathways to learning, the link of media analysis and practice to standards-based education is questionable. Nonetheless, as an integration strategy, the insertion of media education objectives into state and national standards documents is not a bad idea. It will not counter the impact of standardized tests, but at least it keeps the concept of media education visible in the curriculum.

In addition, more research is needed to assess class differences in the way that media education is taught. This relates to a continuum of courses that are focused on attaining applied skills to those that are more creative, to those related to higher-order "systems thinking" objectives. For example, scholars have noted inequity in the experiences of students based on race, social class and gender that may have a direct relationship to the design of the learning environment for digital and information literacy. Unfortunately, this is not a new challenge. In her 1980 article, "Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work," Jean Anyon examined fifth-grade classes in New Jersey across a continuum from working-class to wealthy school districts.

Professor Anyon found discrepancies in the activities and expectations in each of these schools. The working-class schools required rote memorization, routine procedures for doing the work, and no encouragement for analytical thought. In middle-class schools, she found that "work is getting the right answer" (p. 77). She noted, "There is little excitement in school work for the children" (p. 79).

> In a more affluent school, Professor Anyon found, work emphasized creativity. In the wealthiest school, work meant 'developing one's analytical intellectual powers.' These differences, she concluded, helped recapitulate existing class divisions. The children of blue-collar families, for instance, received 'preparation for future wage labor that is mechanical and routine, while those of wealthy families were taught skills that would help them assume leadership positions.' [In another book, she writes] 'At-

tempting to fix inner-city schools without fixing the city in which they are embedded…is like trying to clean the air on one side of a screen door' (Fox, 2013).

In the context of media production, these inequitable practices are akin to training contract workers for the media industry vs. providing experiences in the media arts for a broad range of creative practices. In addition, it is important to note that design elements in the learning environment are not limited to pedagogies. They include access to resources and even the design of the built architectural space of closed rooms, stationary furniture, narrow hallways and lecture theaters. In the end, the design of these educational spaces speaks volumes about the social and political priorities of contemporary public education.

As a result, many scholars and practitioners embrace the value of informal learning spaces for literacy learning. In an article on digital literacy, Sefton-Green et. al. reflect on students' engagement with commercial digital culture in informal learning spaces.

> Here, the argument is that digital literacy develops in social context, and in concert with other media literacies (as well as with alphabetic print literacy). Obviously, this approach to digital literacy is not in a position to define "standards" of literacy achievement, and the conceptualization of literacy as used in these contexts is quite different from its use in education programmes and in forms of standardized normative literacy assessment currently being put in place in England, the United States of America and Australia (pp. 108-109).

Some argue that informal learning environments provide a richer and more engaging place to learn and practice digital and information learning than can be found in most public schools. Although promising for cross-fertilization of formal and informal learning spaces, the either-or conversation

diverts attention from the needs of students. While compulsory education is in obvious need of innovation at every level, it still provides crucial opportunities for face-to-face engagement with digital learners for many hours every day on a regular basis. This social space for collaboration, networking, learning and civic engagement is arguably one of the most valuable assets for public schooling—and the one most ignored. Fortunately these are also well aligned with literacy practices for critical analysis and production.

Innovation is emerging from small-scale, formal and informal partnerships that position digital and information practices as integral to the design of the learning environment. Many of these field tested efforts are ripe for scaling up. Some examples include the Institute of Play (instituteofplay.org), the Educational Video Center's partnership with City-As-School High School in New York City (evc.org) and the Convergence Academies, a partnership with Chicago public schools and Columbia College (convergenceacademies.org). These are only a few of the testbeds for innovation that reflect the five supports identified by Bryk et al. (2010) for school improvement: leadership, instructional guidance, professional capacity, student-centered learning environments and parent/community support.

In particular, the Convergence Academies in Chicago work with a philosophical framework for their learning design that reflects these five supports and, incidentally, also corresponds with Common Core Standards. These include collaboration, authentic participation, play, choice of expression, critical response and iterative learning (Columbia College Chicago & Center for Community Arts Partnerships, 2013).

Bridging Media Analysis and Production

Innovative examples of best practices in media education also reflect environments of critical analysis and critical production at every level. The current trend in multi-modal uses of media complicates the choices for educators who want to combine production and related distribution practices with critical analysis in the learning environment. This

is especially difficult for educators who have little prior experience with production in any medium. The learning curve for production includes understanding of equipment, software, technical considerations, knowledge of aesthetics, vocabularies for codes and conventions across multiple media, awareness of artistic movements, and distribution tactics—to name a few dimensions of the production process. Gaming, virtual worlds, data visualization and other forms of production involving sophisticated software programs and coding may be even more difficult for educators who have never had opportunities to go beyond consumer photography and video production. As a result, hands-on production is not commonly practiced as an integral component in public schools.

However, production is often found in community-based, informal, media organizations that specialize in youth media. These organizations grew from traditions of media access and activism and often partner with schools to introduce media production to students. These strategic partnerships design formal and informal learning opportunities through after-school programs, production camps and occasionally through opportunities for production during the school day.

Because most educators are familiar with "storytelling," production exercises are often focused on the conventions of narrative structure. This is useful as a scaffolded approach to production. However, it can be argued that narrative conventions may differ by media and that media are not only interpreted by their narratives. For example, it could be said scriptwriting techniques for film are often more about dialogue than description. It could even be said that many films are more about editing and shot composition than about storytelling.

This is where McLuhan's broad ideas about the tensions between form and content can be helpful. For example, screen aesthetics for mobile media differ from those of theatrical films. The concept of authorship and scripts in games and virtual worlds can be fluid, whereas the authorship of novels is usually static. Cross-disciplinary understanding is essential to create the infographics and data visualization that

make complex information accessible to a broader public. Panoramas are more common in games than in movies because the animation software used in games makes this technique easier to execute. The list goes on.

The focus on narratives over aesthetics also speaks to power relationships, voice and authority in the context of educational systems, a process that I have called "the tyranny of the narrative" (Tyner, 2009). One thing that helps students to bridge critical analysis with media production is a fundamental knowledge of the arts and artistic movements in every medium. In turn, this helps students to form a vocabulary to deconstruct and critically analyze media texts in a more informed way. Reflection about the artistic process is essential to critical production. Instead of high-stakes, year-end epics, it helps to experiment with cheap equipment, such as mobile phones and short, "throw away" projects. These allow the space for students to experiment, critique and reflect on their own artistic process as they learn the codes and conventions of production across multiple, interactive media.

Finally, it is important to note that the arts are a major locus of radical reflection and resistance. In his 1974 book, *Film as Subversive Art*, Amos Vogel ties these ideas to movements in experimental film production by community-based filmmakers:

> By restoring the primacy of the visual element, this movement brings us face to face with the essence of the medium, the inexplicable mystery of the image. Its god is Eisenstein rather than Shakespeare. The literacy origin and form of commercial cinema—tied to narrative structures and naturalistic sound tracks, to which the images are subsidiary—is discarded (p. 308).

Scholarship and practice related to the intrinsic artistic qualities of digital media are still evolving. Nonetheless, new conventions for 3D media, pixelization, authorship, curatorship, remix, data visualization and intertextual artistic processes provide exciting new ideas that can help to expand the scope of media education by linking and contextualizing media production and analysis across the traditional curriculum.

Designs for Learning

The current realignment of priorities in the formal education sector provides exciting opportunities to integrate media education, but challenges remain. The pathways of literacy vary for each domain and people can be experts in some areas and basic learners in others. For example, many people identify as experts in reading and amateurs in writing, or they might have problems with vocabularies and contexts for analyzing media, yet they are creative producers of media. Others feel confident with their literacy skills in offline spaces, but not as confident in online spaces. It could be argued that throughout history, the competency levels for reception and production skills have favored readers over writers.

In addition, contemporary literacy practices demonstrate commonalities in online and offline communication that can be connected for learning. One learning design strategy that transcends online and offline environments is the concept of "blended learning." The term is usually applied to distance education courses that combine face-to-face learning methods with computer-mediated activities. When applied more generally to digital and information literacy practices, blended learning makes use of the codes and conventions of a variety of media, in multiple contexts, to identify links and support fluency in media analysis and production in both virtual and real world contexts. The goal is to better enable learners to code switch between the interdisciplinary conventions of analysis and production for different media in multiple settings. Changing from traditional to flexible and customized designs for learning is a messy process that demands some time for experimentation, front-end analysis and feedback.

The research and dialogue around blended learning as a fluid transition between online and offline spaces is helpful as educators move beyond the veneer of print literacy concepts over complex multiliteracy practices. More understanding of the

potential links between learning environments, particularly the link between analysis and production expertise in offline and online spaces could offer rich opportunities to design instruction for deeper literacy skills. Whether teacher certification programs and professional development opportunities will embrace innovation of this type remains to be seen.

When applied to actual learning opportunities for literacy attainment, some details matter. For example, within each of the broad domains of analysis and production, prior experience and knowledge of related communication conventions and practices contribute to these deeper literacy practices. These include awareness of rhetoric, technical expertise, aesthetics, artistic movements, distribution strategies, Big Data, privacy, and media business practices, to name a few. These broader social contexts may help to identify links between media analysis and practice that contribute to deeper literacy practices in any social environment.

The End of the Beginning of Media Literacy: Bridging the Gaps

As literacy evolves into multiliteracies, media literacy still uses the binary concept of print literacy, expressed as media analysis (reading) and production (writing). While useful as a starting point, simple binary descriptions of literacy can also project artificial boundaries and ambiguous connections that obscure, confuse and limit dialogue and research related to actual literacy practices in the classroom and beyond. Furthermore, the binary concept of literacy as analysis and production represent orderly "silos" that draw on the public's prior knowledge and "comfort zone" with print conventions. In the context of formal education, these silos also can reiterate and protect hidebound traditions related to models of efficiency and assumptions about the role of public schooling in society, such as rigid disciplinary boundaries, standards-based education, direct instruction, high-stakes assessment and the dismal architectural and interior design in the built world of schooling.

Conversations about contemporary media education express more opportunities to break down the silos and to creatively explore the related, interdisciplinary network of skills and knowledge that connect analysis and production. This extends to a deeper understanding of the interaction between online and face-to-face literacy practices. Detailed analysis of the bridges and barriers between media analysis and practice go a long way toward supporting the deeper practices that are associated with contemporary literacy practices. The spaces for educational innovation are not always tied to public schooling. Instead, they are happening in collective, local and participatory learning environments in youth media organizations, libraries, museums, non-profits, and other cultural institutions. They are occurring both online and offline. The opportunities for learning are ubiquitous (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009).

These conversations touch on new frontiers for media education that provide advice for educators and advocates who are designing learning spaces to support media and information literacies.

Building Blocks for a New 21st Century Literacy

Focus on a Design Curriculum. Provide relevant and project-based learning environments that honor students' every day literacy practices. Integrate critical media analysis and creative practice at every level. Connect cultural and historical contexts related to the role of the arts and creative practices in the cultural commons.

Work Locally. Think Globally. Customize learning environments to local needs and cultures, but also use international research, networks, policies and resources to inform and support your local efforts.

Practice Systems Thinking. Use interdisciplinary research to connect and analyze real-world literacy practices whenever possible. These include interdisciplinary skill and knowledge that cuts across historical production practices, distribution, coding, audiences, business practices, aesthetics, economics, politics and the myriad social uses of literacy.

Architecture Matters. Think creatively to define the time, space and environments for digital literacy and learning. These include architectural elements in both the built space of schooling as well as the design elements, mechanics and navigation of online spaces. If you are designing educational spaces, ask students and teachers for their ideas about the built world of education.

Raise Awareness of New Literacies' Affordances and Constraints. In addition to the uses of new literacies for social capital, also inform students about strategies for managing privacy, surveillance and personal online content.

Seek Strategic Partnerships. Working together, formal and informal educators provide a synthesis that bridges gaps in media analysis and production skills and knowledge. In the process, these practitioners provide cross-generational mentorships for educators and information hubs for the broader community.

Use Research and Impact Evaluation. Collect research and impact evaluation related to lessons' learned from fieldtests and other innovative practices. Engage scholars and researchers as strategic partners who can help to design, collect and analyze research. Use the evidence of best practices to scale up successful programs.

This forensic vision for literacy studies goes beyond advocacy for media literacy education. It goes beyond the history of media education. As digital tools and practices become routine for students, their experiences with digital devices and practices in school settings have a tendency to "ping pong" between entrenched resistance and experiential chaos, depending on the individual instructor or school culture. The problem is centered in nuanced assumptions about appropriate practices for formal educational systems and their accountability to the public. Although the subject of literacy seems like a side issue, it is actually an embedded and inextricable component in any concept of free public schooling. As the social contract between the public and school systems begins to unravel, it presents an opportunity to propose revitalized spaces for ubiquitous learning based on contemporary literacy practices and student-centered learning environments. ✣

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Media Arts Education and Media Literacy

by Dain Olsen

Dain Olsen has served in multiple leadership and administrative roles in the establishment of "media arts education", as the "5th arts discipline", at local, state and national levels, through the development of distinct standards, curricula, programming, and community. As the Media Arts Writing Chair for the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, he led the development of the National Core Media Arts Standards and model assessments for K-12 education. As a Media and Visual Arts Specialist in LAUSD, he led the establishment of media arts there, and has developed and administered 14 media arts programs at middle and high schools. He serves on California's arts education CREATE CA task force for 21st C. Instruction and Curriculum. Dain has over 25 years of experience in media and visual arts instruction in K-12 and higher education, including: educational technology integration, transdisciplinary, project and design-based learning, arts education strategy and policy, and emerging digital literacies. He is currently on the founding faculty for the Vermont College of Fine Arts MAT Program, and a lecturer for UCLA VAPAE. He consults, conducts professional development, and writes in the areas of creativity, technology, culture and learning. Dain is an intermedia artist in video, sound, installation, sculpture, performance, and interactive media.

The inclusion of "media arts" in new, voluntary arts standards by the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards is a historic moment for arts education, as well as education as a whole. Media arts is at the center of our contemporary, global culture, as the digital and interconnecting forms of imaging, video, sound, interactive, and virtual design. This formal delineation allows media arts education to authentically reflect its ubiquitous, powerful presence in this evolving culture, specifically for student learning and expression. Students can create multimedia web sites, architectural and product designs, and interactive apps and games that combine core content with the arts to convey their understanding, and to create new content, just as these forms are used in the world around us. But furthermore, this offering provides unique opportunities for students to step back away from the media environment, both to analyze it objectively, and to consider its unique properties for forming meaning and culture. Students find this area relevant because they are immersed with-

in this culture, primarily as consumers, but are less prepared for proactive roles as empowered producers and critics. With the average daily consumption of media for a U.S. citizen approaching 15 hours per day, and the advent of ever more potent media forms, such as virtual and augmented reality, the necessity for including media literacy in education, in an expanded description, has never been greater. Thus, it is critical that media literacy proponents thoroughly understand media arts pedagogy and its potential core position within K-12 education.

Media arts standards must succinctly, accessibly, and coherently reflect the entirety of this diverse, complex discipline, ultimately towards attaining lifelong artistic literacies. With such broad goals, the discrete package of media literacy cannot be represented in standards beyond a few references to its title. In fact, the standards cannot be highly specific to any one of its many elements, processes, tools, or forms. Nevertheless, the full structure of the standards, including model assessments, em-

beds media literacy among an expanded range of new and emerging 21st century literacies, including information, technology, digital, systems, and aesthetics. This is a natural, integrated approach, with fidelity to a rigorous cognitive process, towards students' creative and communicative empowerment.

As a condensed example of media arts standards-based learning in video game production, students may begin in the *Connecting* process, analyzing the contexts, purposes, and values of various video games, before proceeding with the Producing process of developing their own. Students will then enter the *Creating* process to determine the particular qualities, audience, and intentions of their own productions. They will then proceed to *Responding* to discern the complex components of video games, including spatial grid environments, interactive navigational structures, and how they are designed for specific intentions. After production of their own video game, which could integrate a wide variety of academic contents, they may conclude again in *Connecting* with a meta-cognitive analysis of what they have learned and their game's potential influence in the formation of culture. This model can easily be expanded into much larger cultural experiences and events that could be virtually immersive, inter-arts, transmedia, or community-based in scale.

Students that repeatedly undergo this process throughout their academic careers will gain a broad range of skills and abilities, including these emerging literacies. Media arts processes exist within a "digital culture" which students need to proactively access and analyze throughout the production process, including its systemic, legal, networked, and social aspects. Media arts education can authentically replicate this digital culture within the school setting, allowing students to practice using and testing its dynamics. Students are guided to ask what the nature and protocols of this environment are, how it affects their production, and how they can appropriately interact with its distributed, participatory culture. Through this process, students will come to understand the aspects of media arts technologies in forming common experience and knowing, and for various purposes, as seen across cultures and histo-

ry. Students can analyze multiple points of view and complex, contemporary issues of ethics and equality related to this global context. Therefore, in the example of the student's video game, is there a way its design can contribute to a greater cause, such as environmentally beneficial practices? And, given this intention, how is this game then best designed and shared so that it is effective and accessible to different cultural audiences?

Accompanying aesthetic literacies are intrinsic to the processes of artistic expression and applied design of media arts. These include sensory acuity, multimodal orchestration, inquisitive exploration, play, divergent thinking, innovative adaptation, perseverance, and empathy. This assures that instruction focuses on these higher-level creative aspirations as opposed to an emphasis on tools, technical training, and formulaic solutions. Students should be endowed with the capacity to think beyond the perceived limitations of established structures and technologies, adapting them to their own purposes and intentions. The arts, with their ability to describe, expand, and celebrate the embodied, aesthetic experience, are vital to education in this regard, and media arts can bring this critical valuing to the center of these trans-disciplinary, connected learning processes.

In that regard, media arts is ideally a higher-order and holistic pedagogical approach, which can support project and design-based learning that extends across subject areas and connects the student with the larger community. And though media arts is certainly informed by media industry methods and can support students to become industry practitioners, the goals and methods of media arts position it for a much greater potential. This is best described as an actualizing "culture of learning", which values, fosters, and distributes the processes of learning and free expression for the access and benefit of all students and communities. This prioritizes learning about learning, as a form of creative adaptation in a cultural context, which is at the heart of media arts pedagogy. Thus, media literacy, as the critical analysis of mediated experience, will continually play a vital role within media arts education for developing contemporary cultures. ❖

Challenges for the New Media Arts Standards

by Martin Rayala, Ph.D.

Dr. Rayala was part of the Media Arts Writing Team for the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards that developed the first ever National Core Media Arts Standards and model assessments for K-12 education.

Now that National Standards for Media Arts have been developed (see Dain Olsen's article) there is the hard work of figuring out how to implement them in schools. Who will teach these Standards—art teachers, technology teachers, English teachers, music teachers, theatre teachers? How will teacher preparation programs in those areas change to provide teachers the preparation they need to teach Media Arts? Who will develop the curriculum and assessments to flesh these standards out?

Media Arts are by nature interdisciplinary. They include visual, auditory, linguistic and technical components—images, sounds, story and technology. Whoever teaches Media Arts will need to collaborate with others to provide the full range of media capabilities just like in the real world of media production. English teachers need to be enlisted to add script writing to their curriculum. Music teachers need to add sound design. Art teachers need to add movement, additive light, and visual storytelling to their curriculum. Technology teachers need to include experiences with visual imaging and sound editing hardware and software.

English teachers can help bridge the gap between books, screenplays and media productions. There are special skills and techniques required to write a good screenplay that are different from writing a book. It takes different skills to convert a 400-page book into a 120 minute movie. That's why many books that are converted to movies or television productions often have scriptwriters who are not the authors of the original work. The original author has little or no control over the material once it is in the hands of the media artists. English teachers should add scriptwriting to their curriculum. Many members of the Writer's Guild of America specialize in writing for television.

Music teachers need to expand their curriculum beyond the traditional performance groups (band and chorus) to include the recording industry and the full range of sound design. Sound in media productions not only includes music but sound effects, dialogue, narration, and ambient sound. Each of these areas requires special skills and techniques. Musicians like Danny Elfman, Hans Zimmer and Alan Silvestri have unique skills that allow them to compose music that accompanies movies. Foley artists recreate the ambient sounds (footsteps, doors opening, wind blowing, etc.). Actors must often replace their own dialogue in movies through the process called "looping" that is technically managed by ADR (Automated Dialog Replacement) experts. They often have dialect coaches to help them with accents and other vocal characteristics (think about the difference between the voice of Bruce Wayne and that of Batman coming from the same actor). Sound effects specialists are called upon to create Sound Effects (FX) such as the yowls of Chewbaca,

the vibrating sounds of light sabres, and the whine of space ship engines. Music education in this context becomes more like sound design and the goal is to create students with educated ears.

Art teachers interested in adding Media Arts to their curriculum need to add "movement", "lighting" and "story" to their traditional knowledge base and skill sets. In media there is often movement of the subject on the screen as well as movement of the viewpoint (camera) as well. The visual grammar of dollying, zooming, panning, tracking, craning, etc. is a new language for most visual artists. Media arts use a different color system than most traditional art and design programs. The traditional color scheme taught in art programs is the subtractive method in which all colors can be created from three primary colors—red, yellow and blue. In the additive color system used in most media productions the primary colors are red, green and blue. TV sets and computers, for example, have RGB monitors. How do they make yellow? (Answer: by mixing red and green light).

When media forms like photography and film started being technically feasible the art world saw that this was a direct threat to the role of representation in visual art. As a result, some artists started to move away from representation in their work. The Impressionists, working just as photography was becoming widely available, started to create images that were more impressionistic than realistic. By the middle of the 20th century, many artists abandoned representation altogether to create abstract and expressionist work that didn't try to compete with the camera. As a result, the idea of storytelling in art also fell out of fashion.

Visual Storytelling is a mainstay of many media forms such as television, documentaries, animation, and movies. For many visual artists, the art of storytelling is so out of favor that they can't identify with television and movies as art forms. It was quite a trick for the Standards writing team to write about Media Arts while avoiding the use of the words television or movie but they managed to do so.

Technology has a big role in media arts. Most technologists have not spent much time learning to tell clear and compelling stories with the media software and hardware they develop. One major exception is Ed Catmull who, when he found he didn't have the visual skills to be an animator, focused on developing technologies for animation and ultimately became head of animation for Pixar and Disney. His recent book, *Creativity, Inc.*, is a must

> *"...it began to sink in that we were a part of the transformation of the history of education. For the first time ever, there were now national standards for a 5th art form —Media Arts."*

read for anyone interested in taking their work from average to outstanding. He provides hints as to how Pixar was able to produce 14 blockbuster, animated films in a row by not settling for "good enough".

At the 2015 National Art Education Association conference in New Orleans, five of the writers of the National Media Arts Standards made separate and joint presentations throughout the conference. Near the end of the conference, we all gathered for a celebratory dinner at a restaurant overlooking the Mississippi River. As we basked in the warm evening air, it began to sink in that we were a part of the transformation of the history of education. For the first time ever, there were now national standards for a 5th art form—Media Arts. We just let that realization settle in before we turned our attention to the hard work ahead of making these standards a reality in schools. ✲

Getting to Know the National Media Arts Standards

by Martin Rayala, Ph.D.

National Coalition for **CORE ARTS** Standards

The Media Arts Standards are divided into four Artistic Processes—Creating, Producing, Responding, and Connecting. Each Artistic Process also has Anchor Standards (listed as A, B and C below) that are subsets of the Artistic Processes.

1. Creating
   A. Conceiving—generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work
   B. Developing—organize and develop artistic ideas and work
   C. Constructing—refine and complete artistic work
2. Producing
   A. Integrate—select, analyze, and interpret artistic works for presentation
   B. Practice—develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation
   C. Present—convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work
3. Responding
   A. Perceive—perceive and analyze artistic work
   B. Interpret—interpret intent and meaning in artistic work
   C. Evaluate—apply criteria to evaluate artistic work
4. Connecting

   A. Synthesize—synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experience to make art
   B. Relate—relate artist ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

Some of the language in the Standards may seem strange because the overseeing group wanted all of the art forms to use the same basic structure and Music (the most powerful of the art forms) controlled much of the development. The concept of Constructing, for example, could seem to fit under the conceptual area of Creating as well as under Production because in Music there is a distinction between writing and performing music. Constructing Music means writing it and Producing Music means performing it. In Media Arts the counterpart would be writing a script or creating a storyboard (Constructing) and making a film (Producing).

The first Artistic Process, Creating, in other contexts is often used to mean making things with your hands. In this case, Creating means a mental act rather than a physical act. Creating is used here to mean conceiving of an idea and developing it as well as constructing (designing or planning) it.

Producing requires integrating ideas, having the skills required to skillfully make something, and presenting. Again, this construct works best for Music because they use the word Performing which requires rehearsal and a venue in which to perform. Non-performing arts did the best they could to fit into this "performance" construct.

Responding is part of producing works of art but can also be separated as in the act of art criticism or the study of art history. Responding requires

careful observation, interpretation and evaluation—what critics and art historians do.

You may notice that the first three artistic processes each have three Anchor Standards but the last one, Connecting, has only two. That's because each art form felt that it was important to (1) connect to the real world in order to help create works of art and (2) to relate the works of art to the artists understanding of the real world. In a sense, this is the answer to the students' proverbial question "Why do I have to learn this stuff?" You'll notice that the connections include societal, cultural, and historic contexts but not scientific or technological—reinforcing the division between C.P. Snow's Two Cultures (Humanities and Sciences).

The third Connection, which none of the art forms was willing to make, would be to make a connection with all learning and show how visual, kinesthetic and aural communication, along with linguistic and numerical, are ways of learning about anything and everything there is to know.

Including a third Anchor Standard under Connecting would have meant that the various silos of learning like Language, Math, Music, Art, Theatre, Dance, and Media Arts would have to see themselves and teach as if they are part of history, social studies, technology, humanities, science and so on. Each subject area would have to accept responsibility for making a connection to our understanding of the universe.

This would cause music to reinvent itself as the study of sound and include acoustics, speech, sound design, the recording industry and media. Visual art would be Visual Studies that would include Visual Art, Visual Culture, Visual Design and Visual Communication. Dance would be part of Kinesthetic learning and inform everything from modern dance to animation and robotics. For example, Alicia Vikander, who portrayed a robot named Ava in the movie "Ex Machina," was able to use her dance background to help create the otherworldly movements of a character somewhere between human and machine.

Members of the Media Arts Standards Writing Team presented at the National Art Education Association Conference in New Orleans. (From Left to Right) Jeremy Hollien, Nelle Stokes, Martin Rayala, Chair Dain Olsen, and Annie Kaye.

We weren't ready to go so far as making a systematic Connection to all of learning that transcends subject area silos in 2015 but, in ten or twenty years, when the standards are revised again, perhaps we will be ready for a third Connecting standard that opens the doors and windows connecting all of learning. ✣

Media Literacy 4.0:
Empowerment and Protection in the Elementary Grades

by Renee Hobbs

Renee Hobbs is a teacher, researcher, educational leader, and advocate for digital and media literacy education. She is Professor of Communication Studies at the University of Rhode Island's Harrington School of Communication and Media, where she co-directs the Graduate Certificate in Digital Literacy. She founded the Media Education Lab to advance media literacy education through research and community service, developing interdisciplinary scholarship and practice that stands at the intersections of communication, media studies and education. Hobbs has provided staff development to educators from across the United States and on four continents around the world. Over 25 years, Hobbs has developed award-winning multimedia curriculum and has published more than 100 scholarly articles and books including *Discovering Media Literacy: Digital Media and Popular Culture in Elementary School* (2013), *Copyright Clarity: How Fair Use Supports Digital Learning* (2011) and *Reading the Media: Teaching Media Literacy in High School English* (2007). She is the co-editor of the *Journal of Media Literacy Education* (www.jmle.org), an online, open access peer-reviewed scholarly journal sponsored by the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE). In 2012, she served as the Digital Literacy Fellow for the American Library Association (ALA). In 2010, her white paper, *Digital and Media Literacy: A Plan of Action*, published by the Knight Foundation and the Aspen Institute, offered a comprehensive approach to implement digital and media literacy education to the 50 million students now enrolled in U.S. elementary and secondary schools.

It's obvious: the 5-year-old growing up in 2014 is not the same as the 5-year-old growing up in 2010 or the one growing up in 2007. Although the broad developmental outlines of childhood remain universal, children today face some substantially different daily life experiences as compared with children growing up just five or ten years ago.

In this essay, I share some ideas about how media literacy educators and scholars may improve educational practice by examining how concepts of empowerment and protection relate to instructional practices of media literacy for children between the ages of 5–11. First, I show how young children can use language to demonstrate active reasoning about their media preferences and in doing so demonstrate observational skills that serve as precursors of

media literacy analysis competencies. Then I discuss the pedagogic value of accidental transgression, which occurs when children are exposed to media they believe that their parents would not want them to see. Finally, I reflect on what media literacy educators can learn from elementary educators when a holistic approach to education is used to address the needs of the whole child, including the child's head, heart and spirit.

What Children Discover When Using Digital and Mass Media

With all our emphasis on message analysis, critical inquiry and critical thinking, media literacy educators sometimes find they have little to offer parents and teachers of younger children. Beyond the value

of setting limits, co-use, and asking questions, little is still known about how media literacy competencies develop among preteens in relation to the roles of parents and teachers (Mendoza, 2013). Indeed, some scholars question whether media literacy competencies in young children may develop with or without instruction (Buckingham, 2006; Scheibe & Rogow, 2013). Although some early childhood educators have positive views about the role of media and new technologies, there are a very limited number of examples of media literacy education in the context of K-6 education in the United States. Given the general lack of professional development materials or curriculum resources available to teachers, this is to be expected. At the present time, the scholarly literature on elementary media literacy education is quite slender even when including work in the areas of digital media and learning or educational technology.

More work is needed to advance digital and media literacy in the elementary grades. After de-veloping media literacy curriculum materials for elementary educators (Hobbs, 1998) we have stepped up to offer professional development programs for elementary teachers and begun to articulate what a learning progression in media literacy might look like among younger children (Hobbs & Moore, 2013). This work is aligned with other researchers who have shown that the use of children's popular culture in educational institutions may offer recognition of young children's identities and the things they value, thus enhancing self-esteem and motivating children to participate more deeply in learning (Dyson, 1997; Marsh, 2006).

In collaboration with Laurada Byers, founder of the Russell Byers Charter School, I developed the Powerful Voices for Kids program as a uni-versity-school partnership program designed to strengthen children's ability to think for themselves, communicate effectively, and use their powerful voices to contribute to the quality of life in their families, their schools, their communities, and the

Figure 1: Children from high and low SES backgrounds use online media text and tools
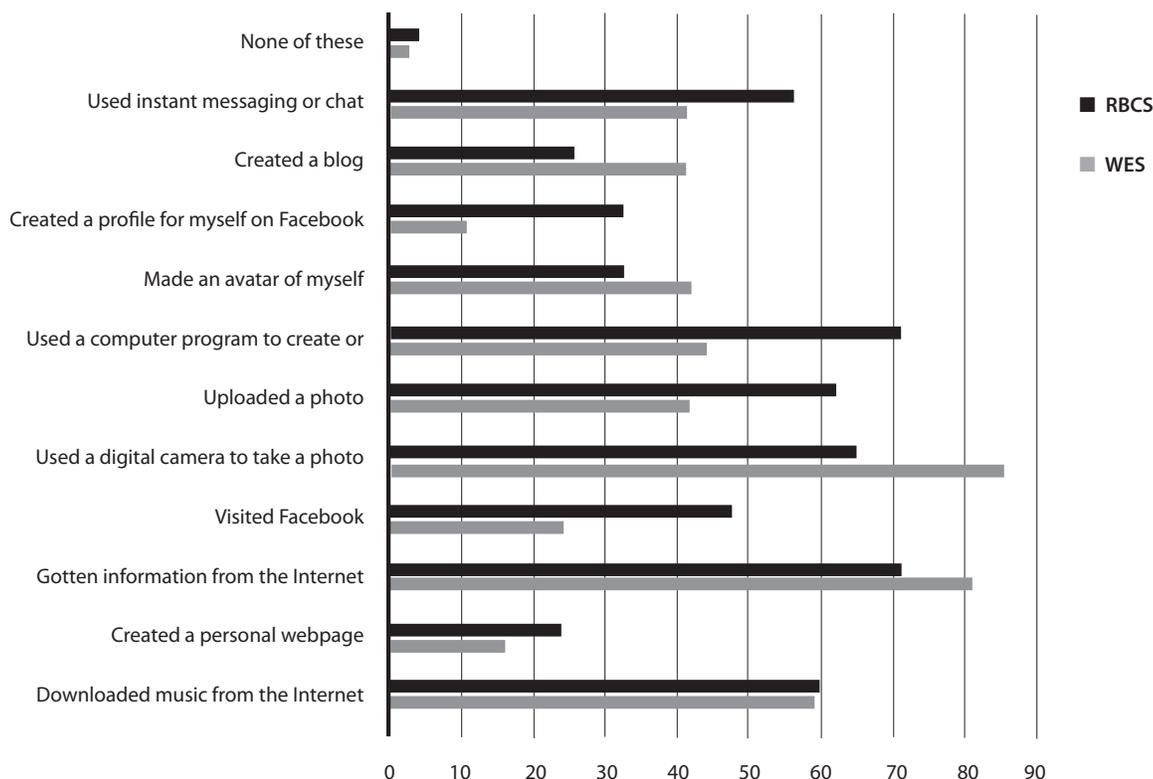
world (Hobbs & Moore, 2013). Fundamentally, the Powerful Voices for Kids project aims to connect the classroom to contemporary culture. Between 2008—2011, the Powerful Voices for Kids program was implemented in both urban and suburban schools.[ii]

How do digital and media literacy competencies emerge in developmental context, both in and out of school? Many children ages 5—11 are actively using, learning and experimenting with a variety of media texts, tools and technologies online. These behaviors are occurring in both wealthy affluent communities and in families with high levels of poverty. Figure 1 shows some of the digital media activities that children are doing both at home and in school. In comparing children's media and technology use behaviors in two elementary schools, we found some differences between students in an urban school (RBCS) and those from a suburban school (WES). As Table 1 shows, neither group was particularly deprived when it comes to access to media technologies. Almost all the children lived in

Figure 2: Active reasoning as a precursor to media literacy

houses with access to a plethora of media and technology, including broadband Internet. Most children have downloaded music from the Internet and used search strategies to get information. Most have used a digital camera to take a photo. But some differences

between the groups are evident. Children from the urban school were more likely to have used a computer program to create or design pictures and were more likely to have created a profile for themselves on Facebook. These differences may reflect factors in the home environment or reflect parental values about the relative merits of online participation.

Today's young children are in the process of developing mastery as fully literate individuals, learning to manage themselves independently by advancing social relationship skills, activating intellectual curiosity, and cultivating persistence, openness, flexibility, adaptability, and other habits of mind. Media literacy competencies help them:

(1) use speaking and listening in a variety of social contexts to share information, opinions, and feelings;

(2) experiment with using a wide variety of media texts, tools and technologies;

(3) understand that authors have purposes and goals in mind when they design and create messages;

(4) be sensitive to others and understand how people interpret messages differently depending on their background and life experiences;

(5) feel confident as a communicator in expressing feelings, information, opinions and ideas to a variety of target audiences;

(6) work collaboratively with others to accomplish a socially-meaningful project using communication texts, tools and technologies and

(7) display active reasoning in reflecting on their own media content and technology choices, and consider how their choices may affect their own knowledge, attitudes and values.

We have found that although prepubescent children may not demonstrate critical thinking skills as traditionally defined by the use of hypothetical reasoning and abstraction, some children between the ages of 5—11 develop descriptive language skills that serve as precursor competencies to support the development of digital and media literacy competencies. We call this *active reasoning* and have discovered that some children's talk about their media choices reveals important characteristics that indicate a disposition towards media literacy. As

part of a larger survey of children's media use, we asked children to describe their favorite TV shows, video games, and music and write why they like it. In a study of 156 children ages 9—11, we discovered that high-achieving, gifted African-American children demonstrate more active reasoning about their favorite TV shows, compared to regular educational peers not identified as gifted (Hobbs & RobbGrieco, 2013).

When asked to explain why they like their favorite TV show, other examples of children's active reasoning responses included: "I like Naruto because it is about a boy who will follow his dreams no matter what" and "It is about a teenager who is a rock star and it shows me that even a kid can be famous and a star. It was her dream and even if it was hard, she accomplished it. It shows me that I can do that too." These kinds of responses suggest that children are not just emotionally reacting to media messages; they are using language in ways that depicts *a stance of active observation and attention.*

I have long maintained that information or media literacy skills are not just metaphorically similar to basic literacy but also have functional similarities. Research with adolescents has shown that exposure to media literacy education increases reading comprehension and text analysis skills (Hobbs & Frost, 2003). Active reasoning about television, music and videogames may promote a 'lean-forward' experience that contrasts with a more typical passive use of media as for purposes of relaxation, habit and entertainment. When students are actively reasoning about their media choices, they are thinking about media's content and form in relation to their own desires, interests and needs. Such engagement with the process of meaning-making through symbolic forms, especially through the use of mass media and popular culture texts, can promote the development of critical thinking and reasoning skills that are associated with academic achievement.

Accidental Transgression and Risks of Digital Media

It is during middle childhood that many children have their first experience with media messages that create feelings of discomfort, confusion and fear, including media violence, sexually explicit content, racial stereotypes and hate speech, and pornography (Livingstone & Haddon, 2009). I am a proud protectionist because I recognize it as an important dimension of media literacy education. I have argued elsewhere that those who seek to trivialize protection by reference to "moral panics" are out of touch with the complex lived experience of children and their families (Hobbs, 2008). In our work with Philadelphia children, we documented that about 50% of urban and suburban children ages 9—11 have experienced negative media exposure, something we call *transgression*, a phenomenon that provides an ideal 'teachable moment' for media literacy educators (Hobbs, 2011b). We asked children: Have you ever seen something on YouTube that your parents would not want you to see. Did you see something on a website that your parents would not want you to see? Did you see something on TV that your

Figure 3: Accidental online transgression among 8 to 11 year olds

Have you seen something on YouTube that your parents wouldn't want you to see?

- Yes
- Yes, but it was an accident
- No
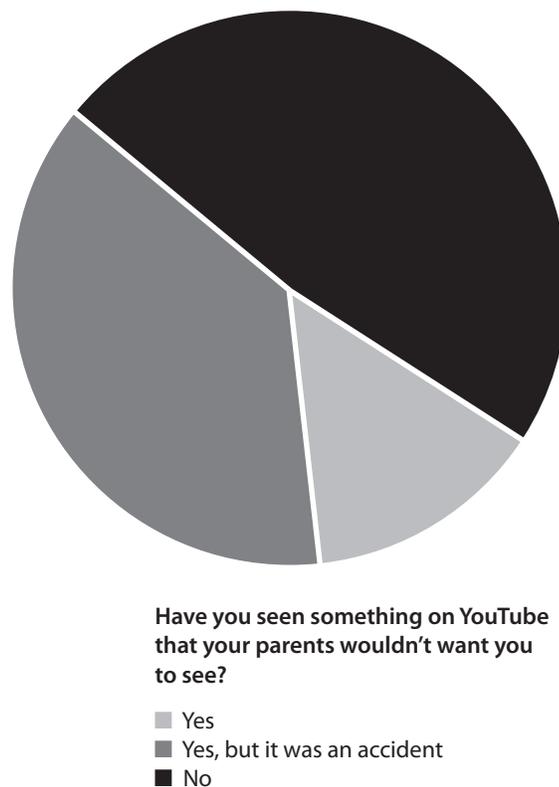
parents would not want you to see? Did you hear something on the radio your parents would not want you to hear? We asked it in a variety of forms. We always got the same results. Among 9 to 11-year-olds, about half say no. Among the other half, some children say, "Yes," while others say, "Yes, but it was an accident." Research shows that younger children experience more intense emotional response to media they find inappropriate and disturbing (Cantor, 1998) so it is important to explore the pedagogic value of engaging children in dialogue about their response to accidental transgression. When handled wisely with appropriate intervention from parents or teachers, I believe that both intentional and accidental transgression can be a stimulus to learning, reflective thinking and emotional growth (Hobbs, 2011b). This form of protection is a key dimension of media literacy education.

Growing up in a household with wireless broadband access, many American children before the age of 10 have a variety of independent experiences with digital and social media. That is why it is not easy for parents or teachers to address the challenge of children's accidental or intentional transgression. Advice about protecting kids from media influence that do not take into account the ubiquitous availability of wireless broadband is unhelpful to parents who are unable to monitor children's media use.

This is one of the reasons we saw dramatic increases between age 9 and 10 in the number of children who had created Facebook pages. Although some parents may actively support their children in lying about their age to bypass COPPA rules that limit the collection of personal information from children under age 13 (boyd, Hargittai, Schultz & Palfrey, 2011), for many children, participation in social media is not sanctioned by adults, but something that is done privately and secretly, often as a result of natural curiosity or perceived peer pressure.

At about age 10, for many children, a *culture of digital secrecy* may begin. When children first experience accidental transgression, they may be hesitant to inform parents or teachers because they know the response will likely involve limiting media use. This

then leads to more independent exploration and more exposure to risky content (Livingstone, Kirwil, Ponty, & Staksrud, 2014). In the future, media literacy educators will need to develop innovative and socially responsible instructional practices to engage students in reflective thinking about how and why values are transmitted through the media messages we select, use and share. It is likely that a better understanding of the historical trajectory of media literacy education will prove to be valuable as we recover concepts, ideas and instructional practices from earlier eras that may apply to contemporary challenges (RobbGrieco, 2013).

What Elementary Teachers Know

In the years to come, elementary teachers will be the next major group of educators to discover media literacy. In working with this group, a careful balance between protectionist and empowerment approaches will be important to cultivate. Most elementary teachers are concerned about the actual benefits of technology for their students. In a review of five national surveys of K-12 teacher attitudes about media and technology, results show that despite the hype coming from the media and technology sector, many teachers remain skeptical about the benefits of all things digital (Pressey, 2013). Other studies find that teachers believe that the logistical and practical challenges of using technology in classrooms simply outweigh the benefits (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2013).

Research on everyday media literacy instructional practices in elementary public school classrooms that demonstrates an impact on academic achievement will help counteract some of the hype that now circulates in the discourse community of digital media and learning, which has largely examined out-of-school programs that receive external funding from charitable foundations. This will be a major interest of the researchers and scholars at the Media Education Lab in the years ahead.

Elementary teachers' own experiences with young children represent an important source of evidence and information that could be more fully exploited by media literacy researchers, advocates and

practitioners. There is much still to discover about "what works" in the elementary grades. In our field work, we have learned that efforts to implement digital media learning practices create *messy engagement,* which we define as the unpredictable activity that results in classrooms when teachers interact with children about the media and technology they use at home (Hobbs, 2011a; Hobbs & Moore, 2013). For this reason, I argue that *strategic risk-taking and improvisation* should be important components of professional development programs in media literacy, as we help teachers manage the unpredictability that comes from the more equitable power relationship between teachers and students in the media literacy classroom (Hobbs, 2012).

Although elementary school teachers spend all day with children, parents and researchers may sometimes dismiss and trivialize the day-to-day insights that teachers have. Many teachers experience frustration when implementing tasks that engage students with digital media texts, tools and technologies. For example, Pritchard and Cartwright (2004) conducted an intervention study in the UK that gave 54 students ages ten and eleven a simple research assignment. Even though the task was moderately structured, with a selected list of information resources provided, researchers found that the quality of student work was poor, consisting mostly of small samples of information. A major problem during the task was that students spent time on "distraction activities," and would "'wander off,' accessing websites that had little to do with the activity." Many teachers experience frustration at the challenges of keeping a roomful of children "on-task" when the lures of Beyonce, Will.i.am and Justin Bieber are only a keystroke away.

Teachers' attitudes about media and technology shape what happens in the classroom, and may impact how knowledge and skills are acquired. Researchers have found that children's digital literacy competencies are at least partially attributable to differences between teachers who were more or less enthusiastic about using online digital media for research and learning (Kuiper & Volman, 2008). Indeed, teachers' values and their approaches to using

digital media in school may sometimes be at odds with students' values and priorities. For example, Erstad, Gilje, and de Lange (2007) document how teachers may sometimes prove unhelpful to student collaboration in creative activities.

The future of media literacy education will require continued attention to the connections between home and school. At the present time, there is little research that compares and contrasts the home context (in which the majority of digital media use occurs) and the school context (in which formal analysis, collaboration and creative activities may take place). For media literacy educators and scholars of the next generation, it will be important to examine and exploit the complex interplay between the digital and media literacy practices that are learned and activated at home and those which are learned and activated at school.

Conclusion

At every stage of life, from the cradle to the grave, we now have encounters with digital and social media that are natural and fundamental parts of human development. So while it is important to focus our attention more fully on the needs of young children, it is also important to reflect on how we, ourselves, are changing and developing in relationship to the digital and social media tools and technologies that are part of our daily lives. Reflect for a moment on the changes to your own practice of reading that you have developed over the past 10 years (Carr, 2010). Who hasn't noticed the way in which our reading behavior has been modified and transformed by the ubiquitous screens in our lives? Skimming and browsing have become more universal reading practices as a result of the changes in how we encounter printed language today.

Even though human development has many universal, widely shared features, it is simultaneously intensely situational and contextual (Erikson, 1950). This phenomenon may lead adults to experience a sense of disjuncture that encourages them to notice differences between the generations and ignore similarities. After all, no child growing up in 2014 could relate to the personal autobiography of

my 5-year old self. Back in 1963, my first deep sense of being an American and a Catholic was established on the playground at Our Lady of Good Counsel Elementary School, when I learned that President Kennedy had been shot. My mom, an elementary school teacher at the school, was crying. It was a very confusing time in our household. There was a flurry of newspaper reading at the dinner table, as I recall. There was a television at school with those large rabbit ears, set up so we could watch the funeral procession. I didn't understand it at the time, but my emerging idealism, faith, and sense of possibility about the future were all deeply tied to my experience, as a child, in navigating the particular current events and media formats of the era, so deeply tied to the cultural context of America in the 1960s.

Today, American 5-year olds are growing up in a cultural landscape where returning veterans from two Middle East wars remind us of the country's long fight against global terror. In the America of 2015, there is a widespread sense of hopelessness, disengagement and apathy towards the possibility that our government can address society's most pressing public health, economic and environmental problems. Children now grow up in a society with extreme disparities of wealth and poverty. Many are growing up in households where parents are multitasking, juggling work and family responsibilities on the mobile phone, texting and maintaining online social networks. They see a continual parade of musicians, actors, celebrities, and athletes attracting our attention with narratives of life's comedy of errors. Media literacy educators must consider carefully how to address the contemporary cultural worlds that are now inhabited by the generation of children who are growing up today.

To continue to advance digital media literacy competencies for all, we must maintain our own intellectual curiosity and adaptability in the rapidly-changing global landscape. In so doing, media literacy educators will continue to be relevant to the lived experience of children, their families and teachers today and in the years to come. ❖

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i The Powerful Voices for Kids program (www.powerfulvoicesforkids.com) consists of six elements: (1) a summer program for children staffed by graduate students and undergraduate students; (2) a staff development program for educators that offers the equivalent of a graduate course in digital and media literacy; (3) in-school mentoring, which is an elbow-to-elbow approach where we place a graduate student or an undergraduate student with a teacher that works directly in the classroom on a specific project for a duration of six, or eight, or ten weeks. The program also includes (4) multimedia curriculum development, including resources and activities for children in the primary and elementary school level; (5) a comprehensive program of video documentation and research; and (6) parent and community outreach (Hobbs & Moore, 2013).

ii The urban charter school (RBCS) was located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on the east coast of the United States. It is a largely poor and minority school with 70% of families who receive free or reduced lunch. The family median income is $35,000.00, and 90% of the teachers are white. Among the students, the school population is 85% African-American. In 2012, only 60% of grade 3 students met state standards for reading. In Philadelphia, that's considered a strong public school because, unfortunately in Philadelphia, most grade three students are not reading at grade level. In this school, this is a high-functioning urban public school, 60 percent of children are reading at grade level. We also worked in several suburban schools. In one suburban school (WES), only ten percent of families received free or reduced lunch. The family median income was $120,000, reflecting the fact the parents had advanced degrees, worked in the pharmaceutical or banking industries. The teachers were 95% white but the students were 75% white, 15% Asian. 88 percent of Grade 3 students met state standards for reading.

Media Literacy Education:
the New Civic Currency

by Paul Mihailidis, PhD

Paul Mihailidis is an Associate professor in the School of Communication at Emerson College in Boston, MA, where he teaches media literacy and interactive media. He is also the Associate Director of the Engagement Lab at Emerson College, and Director of the Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change. His research focuses on the nexus of media, education, and civic voices. His new book, *Media Literacy and the Emerging Citizen* (2014, Peter Lang), outlines effective practices for participatory citizenship and engagement in digital culture. Under his direction, the Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change, a global media literacy incubator program, annually gathers 70 students and a dozen faculty to build networks for media innovation, civic voices and global change. Mihailidis sits on the board of directors for the National Association of Media Literacy Education. He has authored numerous books and papers exploring media education and citizenship, and travels around the world speaking about media literacy and engagement in digital culture. He earned his PhD from the Phillip Merrill College of Journalism at the University of Maryland, College Park.

Media Literacy Philosophy And Approach

When I began writing about media education and young citizens almost ten years ago, I had the pleasure of exploring a burgeoning discipline that was gaining steam in the context of a growing digital culture. Foundational research and field-defining texts (see Buckingham, 2003; Hobbs 1998; Hobbs 2007; Hobbs & Frost, 2003; Jenkins 2006) laid the foundation for the emergence of peer-reviewed academic journals devoted to the topic of media literacy, a host of doctoral dissertations in the area of media literacy, and new explorations that place media literacy in the context of participation (Jenkins et al 2009), play (Ito, 2009) and voice (Rheingold 2008; 2012).

Further, global organizations like UNESCO, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, the European Union, and governmental bodies around the world—including the world's young democracy, Bhutan—have started programs, non-profit organizations and initiatives centered on the need to educate citizens about the role of media in their daily lives. In the United States, Massachusetts and New York have been pushing legislation through the state houses to advocate for media literacy as a core and acknowledged part of K-12 education.

What this vast growth shows me is that media literacy is not only being recognized as a pedagogical tool for youth learning to critically think, explore and express, but moreover that media literacy education is directly tied to the effective functioning of publics in civic societies around the world. The recent uprisings in the MENA countries, Thailand, the Ukraine, Greece, and beyond, show that the use of networks and connective technologies tools are helping to organize and facilitate a wave of impactful and far reaching civic movements in the face of oppression.

My approach to media literacy has been informed by this wave of civic expression. I have come to see media literacy education as inherently positioned at the core of engagement in daily life, from assisting and participating in local community dia-

log and sharing ideas and information with peers, to engaging in the civic causes. For media literacy to continue to grow as the central field for learning and engagement today, it must be seen as an inherent facilitator of participation and belonging in daily life.

Media literacy, to me, is the new civic currency.

Current Work

My current work supports the civic potential of media education by sitting at the nexus of media literacy, young people, and engagement in daily life. I'm interested in how young citizens—as they leave formal school—find points of individual agency through their information and communication habits, and social agency through the connective and participatory networks they are finding more and more space in for collaboration, dialog, interactivity, and voice.

My recent research has produced two books. *Media Literacy & the Emerging Citizen: Youth, Engagement* and *Participation in Digital Culture* (Peter Lang, 2014) is the culmination of three years of research into young people and engagement in digital culture. It breaks new ground in showing a disconnect between use and perception of social tools for information and communication needs, and recommends a series of competencies to engage youth through social and mobile platforms. *Media Literacy Education in Action* (co-edited with Belinha De Abreu, Routledge, 2014), provides a birds-eye view of the state of media literacy education from a pedagogical and theoretical perspective.

My work also explores the role of new connective platforms in daily information and communication habits of young people. I am interested in the phenomenon of curation as a core media literacy competency for a connected generation, the role of the mobile phone in facilitating daily information and communication needs, and perceptions of civic agency within social media platforms.

Beyond research, for the last six years I have directed the *Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change,* a global incubator for innovation across borders, across cultures, and across divides. The Academy engages in collaborative research proj-

ects, digital literacy training, and hosts a summer institute that gathers 70 college students and a dozen faculty from around the world for one month in Salzburg, Austria, to explore and build networks for innovation and entrepreneurial media production in global contexts. More than 400 young media innovators have participated in our program and are now out in the media industry and classroom in over 50 countries around the world. The Academy has also produced a series of global media literacy case studies that have been downloaded in over 100 countries around the world.

At Emerson College, I'm a co-founder of The Emerson Literacy Education and Empowerment Project (eLEEP), which launched in 2012 as a health and media literacy project in partnership with the Boston Public Health Commission. For the past two summers, we've brought 125 high school students from underserved Boston communities to Emerson over a 6-week period to learn how to critically analyze and create media to promote healthy lifestyles.

Coming Changes In Media Literacy

As I look forward at the field of media literacy, I see enormous potential to build a scholarly and academic home for the field that is situated in the foundational civic functions of democratic society. Media education will have no choice but to respond to the role of mobile technologies and connective networks as vibrant spaces for engagement in daily life. As the boundaries between formal and informal spaces for learning continue to dissolve, media literacy will become about more than pedagogy: it will necessarily incorporate the silos that have long existed in traditional communication fields.

My work maintains a strategic focus on the intersection of media literacy, young people, and engagement in digital culture, positioning media literacy in the context of communication, citizenship, and informal learning. Increasingly, this work engages a more global perspective, as the boundaries for information and communication continue to disintegrate into the depths of the Web. My current large-scale research project is under the working title *Borderless Citizens: How a participatory gen-*

eration is reshaping the Global Public Sphere. This project will engage 400 young media makers around the world in a survey and interviews on the competencies needed to be engaged and active innovators in today's digital culture. This project will explore and isolate the media literacy competencies that are most relevant to engagement in global culture.

Moving Media Literacy To The Next Level

For media literacy to continue to coalesce as a core discipline for preparing future citizens for lives of inclusive and engaged participation, I advocate for the following four positions to be taken:

1. Start Taking Sides—In an increasingly ubiquitous media culture, media literacy can no longer be about critical thinking as an end goal. Critical thinking and critical expression, while central to the media literacy field, are not strong enough convictions to warrant the attention that media literacy needs in educational and policy arenas. Media literacy educators must start taking sides: directing critical thinking and expression towards goals, outcomes, and positions. Media literacy for health is about fighting against epidemics in obesity, heart disease, and other ailments that have plagued our time. The end goal must be to help reform issues in some way, shape or form. Otherwise, media literacy will continue to teach about issues, without teaching for issues. Media literacy analysis of political rhetoric about the environment, for example, should be directed at understanding sustainability, climate change, and the media's portrayal of these issues. While youth will come to their own conclusions, media literacy needs to position itself as the place where these decisions can be made, with confidence, humility, and tolerance.

2. Build Research to Support the Field—To be able to take a more activist approach to our work—namely that media literacy is an

essential pedagogy for leadership and engagement today—we need more research to back our work up. Media literacy scholars have been very proficient in writing about approaches to teaching and learning with media, but we have kicked our tires a bit to coalesce as a research-driven field in support of media literacy education. The academic journals now growing offer a start for the field, but too often our research gets subsumed by larger disciplines. Recent studies (Hallaq, 2013; Hobbs et al, 2013; Mihailidis, 2014) provide research that can be used to show the value, or need, for media literacy. This needs to be a bigger part of our mission and culture.

3. Connect Work To Policy—This challenge may be the most difficult to engage with directly, but it's already started. Media education organizations and activists are proposing legislation to bring media literacy into schools in the United States, the EU is working to produce research and curriculum for its members, and in the Middle East, media education is beginning to sprout up in Beirut, Amman and beyond. Media literacy advocates need to begin seeing their work as applied to help reform in formal and informal policy spaces.

4. Make our mission [even more] known—Lastly, media literacy education needs to use its rich history to find its future voice. Media literacy education is well beyond needing to be justified anymore. As the term becomes more familiar, the media literacy community needs to have the scholarship, inquiry, and message ready. I'm less convinced this can happen if the community continues to rehash old divides, argue over best approaches, and think on a small scale.

To think about media literacy as a "4.0" concept, I return to the early roots of the field in the

United States. The 1998 seminar Journal of Communication issue devoted to media literacy covers much of the same content we see today: expressing the ever pressing need to prepare young people for lives of inclusiveness and active engagement in daily life. Over the past two decades, what has changed is the increasing dependence on mediated platforms to facilitate daily information and communication needs, and general knowledge, understanding and engagement with our communities, and world. Within this diverse space, media literacy has the potential to be the new civic currency for a digital generation. The opportunity has always been there, it's time we took sides and took a stance. ❖

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Within this diverse space, media literacy has the potential to be the new civic currency for a digital generation . The opportunity has always been there, it's time we took sides and took a stance .

Social Science Storytelling and Media Literacy

by Bobbie Eisenstock, Ph.D.

Bobbie Eisenstock, Ph.D. teaches and consults about the social and psychological effects of emergent media technologies on children, teens, and families. She is on the faculty at California State University, Northridge where she is a Fellow at the Institute for Community Health and Wellbeing. The National Eating Disorders Association honored her work in media literacy and body image with their 2013 Award for Excellence in Activism and Advocacy.

Media literacy is my personal lens on the world and the cornerstone of my teaching and parenting. I have been a media literacy educator and advocate for more than three decades and a parent for two. Over the years, my application of media literacy has evolved as media technologies converge and morph into new digital innovations that empower individuals to create as well as consume media. In the new digital media ecology, where e-mail, text, tweet, tag, like, pin, post, and yet to be named modes of communication have become common ways we interact for work and play, digital and

> *Media literacy is my personal lens on the world and the cornerstone of my teaching and parenting.*

media literacy education is more critical than ever as a prerequisite for inquiry and self-expression.

I came of age professionally at the time media literacy was in its infancy in the United States. I had just completed a doctorate in communication theory and research, specializing in media's social-psychological effects on children, teens, and family dynamics, and started consulting and teaching at a university. I became actively involved in the media literacy movement and developing resources for parents, students, educators, and the public health community. This led to facilitating workshops for teacher in-services, student assemblies, parent education, professional development trainings and conference presentations.

My approach combines social science research and narrative storytelling with media literacy core concepts and key questions. Storytelling is one of our oldest forms of communication. Stories are accessible across all ages and can impart knowledge, teach skills, provide role models, and help us make sense of our world. And people remember stories. Perhaps more importantly, media have become our primary storytellers. I use media literacy as a framework within which I construct evidence-based stories that explain research findings about media effects—positive and negative—and incorporate news reports about pertinent real life events. I customize each media literacy "lesson" based on the specific topic, nature of the group, latest research and related theories.

For example, a lesson about cyberbullying starts with the same basic core concepts and key questions as one about body image but probes in

terms of the bully, victim, bystander, and bully-victim. Each question is based on what we know about bullying from studies published in peer-reviewed journals or reports and public opinion polls conducted by major research institutions. A lesson about body image focuses on media's impact on issues related to body dissatisfaction and self-esteem that can affect body dysmorphia and disordered eating. Whatever the topic, I develop evidence-based questions to interrogate the message specifically targeted to the particular group—different age children, teens, college students, parents, teachers, counselors, pediatricians, and other youth advocates. The questions vary not only by topic but by age and stage of development, media experience, and professional orientation.

An especially rewarding experience involved collaborating with an interdisciplinary team of experts on a vaccine literacy grant from the Los Angeles Department of Public Health. My role was to develop multimedia training to educate childcare agencies working with underserved families who frequently resist getting their young children essential vaccines because of misinformation and media myths about autism and other "side effects." I demonstrated how media literacy correlates with the public health prevention model and adapted the media literacy framework to question and challenge news reports, celebrity opinions, and other media coverage that contribute to a lack of accurate vaccine information. During role-playing activities and in workshop evaluations, participants expressed an increased understanding of vaccine pros and cons for personal and public health, and demonstrated critical thinking about media's agenda-setting impact on their communities and ways to break down these barriers to accessing vital health services.

The current direction of my work is largely determined by the emergent new media landscape. Media literacy skill-building in managing digital footprints and technology dependency and promoting civic engagement and digital citizenship are among my highest priorities. These skills are integral to everything we do in the digital media culture and affect our personal and professional "brand"

identity, which, in turn, affects our reputation, personal privacy, and overall health and well-being.

Like the majority of their peers, students in my classes are constantly connected to their digital devices but virtually clueless about the digital trail they leave behind with every mouse-click and screen-touch. They tend not to think twice about the complex interplay between public versus private and how the choices they make now may come back to haunt them later. Media literacy can help them get into the habit of assessing the potential risks and benefits of their digital interactions before they post. I teach them to critically analyze and evaluate the value and quality of user-generated content, consider its potential impact on the intended audience, invisible onlookers as well as themselves, and reflect on their ethical responsibility in the global digital society.

My work increasingly takes the lead from ongoing scientific studies conducted by medical experts and media scholars demonstrating digital footprints as new health indicators that can help identify at-risk youth. What youth share in the dig-

Media literacy skill-building . . . [is] integral to everything we do in the digital media culture and affects our personal and professional "brand" identity, which, in turn, affects our reputation, personal privacy, and overall health and well-being.

ital space they inhabit can potentially reveal their susceptibility to offline risks for tobacco, alcohol and illicit drug use, sexual activity, eating disorders, suicide, bullying and sexual harassment, as well as identity theft. When these findings are coupled with digital and media literacy skills, it not only creates a

new skill set for evidence-based care of children and adolescents but helps to move the field forward by building media literacy bridges to other sectors of society. Recently, I keynoted a national gynecology conference, facilitated staff trainings at university student health centers, lectured medical residents at hospital grand rounds, and presented at an international social media symposium for law enforcement.

At the university, I teach media literacy across the disciplines because my courses fulfill requirements for journalism majors as well as non-majors, including one for General Education Lifelong Learning. My students span psychology, political science, health and consumer sciences, engineering and computer science, business, marketing, the arts, even deaf studies. I also offer students a media literacy-driven service-learning experience. This year my civic engagement project was spotlighted at our faculty retreat where I underscored the importance of multidisciplinary digital and media literacy education.

"Service-learning pedagogy is a particularly good fit for teaching and learning media literacy because it emphasizes "learning by doing" and critical reflection to transform the experience into a deeper understanding by asking questions that produce new meaning and knowledge."

Service-learning pedagogy is a particularly good fit for teaching and learning media literacy because it emphasizes "learning by doing" and critical reflection to transform the experience into a deeper understanding by asking questions that produce new meaning and knowledge. Collaborating with a community partner, students apply what they learn beyond the classroom to help build the capacity of the organization to meet its needs and to develop civic responsibility that inspires active participation in the world. Toward this end, students are involved in community-building that educates, engages, and empowers them as citizens in the participatory digital society.

For the past several years, my students have been collaborating with the National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) updating and expanding their media literacy resources. To help launch NEDA's national initiative Proud2Bme On Campus, my students developed social media action strategies that use student voices for personal and social change to combat disordered eating and spread body positivity. They compiled the activities in a guide and serve as peer mentors for students who want to bring the campaign to their college or university (http://proud2bme.org/content/bring-proud2bme-your-campus). Students created the Get REAL! Digital Media Literacy Toolkit (http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/get-involved/media-watchdog) that features interactive activities to help counteract media's influence in normalizing unrealistic body ideals for men and women—you can test your media literacy skills, reflect on what your digital footprint reveals about your body image, post an unfiltered selfie and take a body positive pledge, give a social media shout out to celebrities who speak out against retouched, picture-perfect photos of themselves, and advocate to the media industry for more diverse and natural body shapes and sizes that reinforce healthy lifestyles. There is also a corresponding infographic that highlights research about the effectiveness of media literacy interventions in decreasing certain risk factors for eating disorders. When students create resources like these for themselves and their peers, it fosters critical thinking and enhances the authenticity of the content while widening the reach of media literacy.

In the ever-changing technologically-driven world of the 21st century, digital and media literacy are essential lifelong learning skills, yet media literacy education is still under the radar. The majority of students in my university classes are tech savvy but

few are digital and media literate. When I ask who was taught media literacy in elementary, middle or high school, it is not surprising to find only two or three and they are likely to be international students from countries where media literacy education is more advanced than in the United States. Students also tell me that I am one of the few faculty at our university who teaches media literacy.

I know my media literacy colleagues are as passionate and tenacious as I am about moving the field forward. While each of our contributions uniquely expands the collective conversation, the return on our efforts is not as great as it should be because developments in technology progress at a far faster pace than educational policies and industry regulation. Nonetheless, the growing interest in understanding how the cultural and technological shift impacts the way we create, communicate, and collaborate generates new opportunities to interface with groups outside the mainstream of media literacy education. Seizing these opportunities is critical to repositioning the field in a more global sphere that builds toward the critical mass needed to create a tipping point when digital and media literacy education becomes a national priority. That's what it will take for students to enter the university media literate. ✻

"I've changed throughout this project…I had to determine what my own values and points of view are on many of the issues raised, dramatically altering how I view media because a lot of the messages I simply didn't notice before." –Student, Get REAL! Project

Get REAL! DIGITAL MEDIA LITERACY TOOLKIT

Community Engagement Partnership to educate, engage and empower us about media and body image in the digital media culture

California State University Northridge

NEDA Feeding hope. National Eating Disorders Association
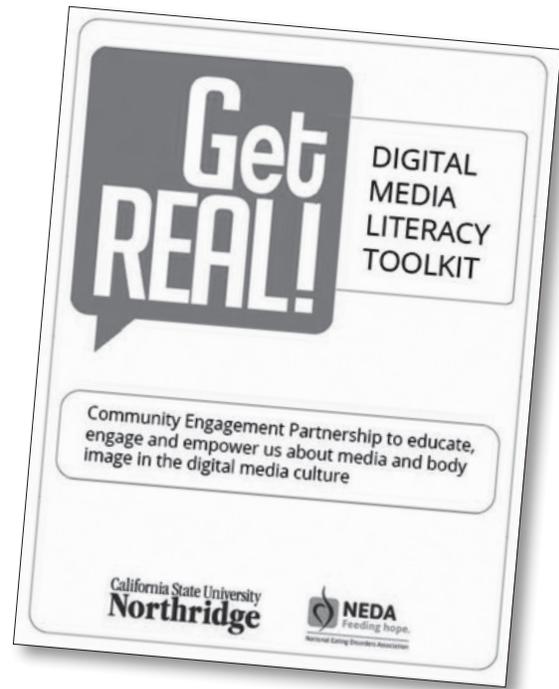
"Prior to this class, it hadn't occurred to me that my voice could make a difference and now I realize I need to be an active participant in the process and encourage those around me to do the same."—Student, Get REAL! Project

Moving Forward and Looking Back

By Belinha De Abreu, PhD.

Dr. Belinha De Abreu is a Media Literacy Educator and an assistant professor at Fairfield University whose work in technology focuses on digital media and learning, encompassing media, visual, and information literacy. She has been featured in Cable in the Classroom, Knowledge Quest, and currently works with the UNESCO Communication & Information Literacy Section on partnerships in Media and Information Literacy. Dr. De Abreu is Vice President of the National Telemedia Council and is on the editorial board of *The Journal of Media Literacy*. She is the author of *Media Literacy, Social Networking, and the Web 2.0 Environment for the K-12 Classroom* (Peter Lang, 2011), and most recently co-edited the book: *Media Literacy Education in Action: Theoretical and Pedagogical Perspectives* (Routledge, 2014).

Who knew that eighteen years ago when I first read the term "media literacy" that it would take me on an adventure through communications, education, social sciences, and much more? Through a variety of interactions and experiences, this field, and I do believe it is a field, has allowed me to learn from a variety of people from all over the world starting with David Considine at Appalachian State University, David Buckingham from the UK, the wonderful Barry Duncan from Canada and so many more. Beyond these initial gurus, I have traveled to places from Sweden, Portugal, France and throughout the United States permitting me to meet so many people who teach and learn about this field—from participants and presenters at conferences to colleagues, and later friends.

As time has moved on, the achievements and struggles in this field have grown and varied with the exchange of the media formats that are part of our lives. These changes have also created new modes of thinking and also restructured my philosophy and approach to be more inclusive—more open to the direction that will continue to shift and transform with time and with the expectation that it will be modified again in the future.

Media Philosophy and Approach

Several issues ago, I formulated my thinking on what is media literacy which is somewhat of my own manifesto and belief. I'll include it here again as it still follows my own approach to media literacy and philosophy.

> **Media literacy is…**
> …the ability to teach and think critically about various media platforms.
> … an acknowledgment of the pleasure of the media to the user which is also extended to those critical conversations in the class which ask the teacher at times to extend beyond his/her comfort level.
> … about processing the changes in our digital age while listening to the student users and their knowledgeable capacity of these new realms of learning.
> … a voice for all students, but especially for those who do not get to speak up on how

their media --their likes and dislikes, impact them personally.

Media literacy education…

… engages the teacher and the learner simultaneously so that a give-and-take relationship can exist within the framework of the classroom thereby becoming an equalizer of shared information.

… necessitates a place in the core curriculum because it has become an instrumental avenue for the growth of knowledge within those traditional areas of learning.

… extends an opportunity for outreach when dealing with issues of safety and security in today's cybersociety.

… serves the wider community by being instrumental in teaching parents, law officers, and other interested parties who are invested in our school communities to access, analyze, evaluate, and produce media messages.

… creates a conscious understanding of the importance of text and images as they transcend the spaces that they are shelved within be it television, the internet, social networking sites, or video games.

Media literacy education is…

… a navigation tool for educators to discuss, challenge, critique, and understand how media, both traditional and new, have impact on students' beliefs, thoughts, behaviors, etc.

… a way to help students become empathetic to another person's difficulties, struggles, or concerns as it requires the participant to consider both sides of every issue.

…the opposite of censorship because it instead seeks to address head-on the concerns and issues which arise from technology which makes many adults fearful.

AND,

… a platform for ultimately creating digital citizens who can reach beyond the scope of their medium of choice ie. computer or cell phone, to be a part of the global community that is seemingly within the grasp of each individual.

Current Work

My views on the media were shaped by the traditional media formats of television, radio, and film. My early connections with the television and the pictures influence my direction in many ways. It led me to eventually get a degree in Communications and then work in the broadcasting world before turning into the field of Education. Over time, the influence of new technologies permeated what would eventually shape part of my current work. As early as 1989, I had learned to code on a computer. Later in college, I had my first experience with an Apple working with Pagemaker. Computers were captivating, but they were purposeful. In 1994, upon entering graduate school the beginnings of the Internet had taken shape and the possibilities it could offer were becoming apparent. For some time, this program was quite flat which is why it became coined a Web 1.0 platform.

Email was taking flight in a big way, but we were FTPing and TCP/IPing—words that will only be understood by those who have had this experience. The late 90's produced a shift that made the Internet more dynamic, but it wasn't until the early part of 2000 that you could see so much more happening until we reached the later part of the decade where social networks took shape and interactive possibilities were apparent. The global connections truly existed and connection in itself was the greater purpose.

Throughout this time, connecting to the media, in particular through the computer, was most important—and concerns were growing about how these connections were taking place, the believability of the information being dispersed, and who the carriers of the messages were. All of this brought media literacy education full circle for me. In 2010, upon visiting the World Summit for Youth and Media, the same issues were being discussed on a worldwide platform. For the first time when educators, policymakers, and other interested parties dis-

cussed media literacy, we were all looking at it with the same context in mind. In fact, perhaps we were on the same playing field because we were working and learning in the Internet age simultaneously.

The venue of educational technology has become where my job has been most focused, but the scope is really to teach and to share why media literacy with its critical thinking pedagogy is most important, most needed, and most relevant. We still tend to look at media for the sake of media and technology for the sake of technology. Certainly, in schools, the garnering of technology sometimes overshadows the literacy component of reading, writing, visual, and media literacy and that to me is

We are at a place of opportunity …Media literacy education is current and we are a part of the future.

where my current focus has led. The tool for helping students and future teachers to learn in the future will be less about the production tool or technology tool, but more about critically considering the message crafted, engaged in, or produced via the variable media source.

Changes Coming

After many years, different venues, and many presentations, the struggle still seems to be getting people to comprehend that "understanding" the media is a viable learning literacy. Conversations have changed and sometimes they stay the same. We still struggle with the term "media literacy" and it continues to be a part of the conversation, but a different name doesn't necessarily make it fit better either. In my own dialogue with colleagues and future media literacy initiatives, the language has been about how we move people forward to critical engagement. Personally, it is still my belief that media literacy is the right term for what we do and it is the backbone of my own pedagogical thinking, the order by which

my college courses are designed, and my thematic approach to conversations with policymakers and educators. For me there is no doubt that the key concepts and key questions that were adapted from early British and Canadian media literacy pioneers by groups like the Center for Media Literacy are still important and innovative. Yes, innovative and simple. The simplicity allows for a deeper dialogue to occur and further engagement.

Vision for the Future

It is my personal belief that in order for media literacy education to move forward, we need to have a strong foundational layer of research and then more advanced work in the field. Referring to what we do in practice is not enough especially when assessments, standards, and research monies become a part of the equation. In order for media literacy to be considered in the realm of 4.0 then we need to embark on a path where the field is uplifted and the motivation to do well by means of the work itself must be in the forefront. We are at a place of opportunity. These opportunities are coming in various ways and through various formats. We must become a community of learners and researchers who engage in the common good in order for the field of media literacy education to be a strong force in a global context and in policy. As mandates continue, we will need to be recognized in order to have a seat at the table. Our work cannot and should no longer go unnoticed. Media literacy education is current and we are a part of the future—wherever it takes us. ✣

Toward a 4.0 Media Literacy: The Digital International Media Literacy E-Book Project

by Art Silverblatt, Sara Gabai & Yupa Saisanan Na Ayudhya

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Media Literacy Philosophy and Approach

Media Literacy is a critical thinking skill that is applied to the source of most of our information: the channels of mass communications. Indeed, studies indicate that the study of media literacy enhances critical thinking skills, as applied to other disciplines. In that regard, Media Literacy is a discipline that focuses on *process* rather than *product*. We don't tell people *what* to think; instead, we teach them *how* to think.

Over the last year, we have focused on the development of the Digital International Media Literacy eBook Project (DIMLE), which is designed to promote international media literacy scholarship. Media literacy is an emerging area of study that has gone global at a furious rate. The media literacy con-

cept builds on prior international documents such as the *Grünwald Declaration of 1982*, which recognizes the need for political and educational systems to promote citizens' critical understanding of "the phenomena of communication" and their participation in media (new and old); the *Prague Declaration "Towards an Information Literate Society* (2003); the *Alexandria Proclamation "Beacons of the Information Society," (2005)* which places media and information literacy at the core of lifelong learning; the *Fez (2011), Moscow (2012) and Doha (2013) Declarations on Media & Information Literacy;* and the *IFLA Media & Information Literacy* recommendations (2011). In that regard, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has declared that Media Literacy is a "Fundamental Human Right," and that media literacy competencies are essential to the achievement of the UN Millennium Development goals, the UN Declaration on Human Rights, and the goals promoted by the World Summit on the Information Society. Similarly, the European Commission (EC) recognizes media literacy education as part of the basic entitlement of every citizen, in every country in the world, to freedom of expression and the right to information, and it is instrumental in building and sustaining democracy.

International Media Literacy is a discipline that identifies the following areas of consensus among countries with regard to media literacy concepts and principles:

- T*he media construct versions of reality.* According to Canada's Association for Media Literacy, "The media do not simply reflect external reality. Rather, they present carefully crafted constructions that reflect many decisions and are the result of many determining factors."[1]
- *Media literacy promotes critical thinking skills that enable individuals to make independent choices with regard to: 1) which media programming to select; and 2) how to interpret the information that they receive through the channels of mass communication.*
- *Media content is a "text" that provides insight into contemporary cultures.* Media presentations reflect the attitudes, values, behaviors, preoccupations, patterns of thought, and myths that define a culture. And conversely, an understanding of a culture can furnish perspective into media presentations produced in that culture.
- *Media content has an impact on individuals and society.* The media have transformed the way we think about the world, each other, and ourselves. In that regard, media presentations also *reinforce* and *shape* the attitudes, values, behaviors, preoccupations, and myths that define a culture.
- *Media literacy offers a range of quantitative and qualitative strategies that enable individuals to decipher the information they receive through the channels of mass communications.* These critical approaches are analogous to a series of lenses, each of which provides fresh insight into media content. The effectiveness of a particular approach is dependent on the specific content, area of focus, or the culture in which the media presentation is produced. Consequently, becoming familiar with these critical approaches furnishes individuals with tools that make media content accessible and understandable.
- *Media literacy can foster an appreciation of media content* Media literacy should not merely serve as an opportunity to bash the media but also provide ways to enhance the audience's enjoyment, understanding, and appreciation of media content.

At the same time, International Media Literacy furnishes perspective into cultures, countries, and regions. In *The Geography of Thought*, psychologist Richard E. Nisbett made the startling pronouncement that people from different cultures *think* differently. According to Nisbett, these *habits of thought* have been influenced through a culture's

distinctive social structures, such as a country's historical, political, economic, religious, legal—and media systems.[2]

If, indeed, the thought process characteristic of people in different cultures varies dramatically, then it follows that:

- People from different cultures may construct media messages differently.

- People from different cultures may interpret media messages differently.

- Certain media literacy strategies may work more effectively in some cultures than others.

- Media literacy education may vary in different cultures.

- Understanding the distinctive thought pattern of a culture can provide insight into its media presentations.

- By extension, a culture's media presentations can furnish perspective into its distinctive thought patterns.

- Further, analyzing the "habits of thought" in media presentations can provide insight into cultures in transition from one stage of cultural sensibility to another.

Currently...

Over the last year, we have focused on the development of the Digital International Media Literacy eBook Project (DIMLE), which is designed to promote international media literacy scholarship.

One of the major impediments to global media literacy education is the lack of useful educational materials suitable for an international audience. This digital text is based on the U.S. print textbook, *Media Literacy: Keys to Interpreting Media Literacy* (Silverblatt), first published in 1995 and now going into its 4th edition. However, the print edition suffers from two limitations:

- *Ethnocentrism* The research, examples, quotes, and cultural references that support the major principles in the text are primarily derived from American media. Indeed, the entire chapter on Political Communications is devoted to the American political system.
- *Timeliness* Because of new technologies and developments, examples, studies, and statistics that appear in the text quickly become outdated. Thus, in the rapidly evolving world of media, portions of the text, including certain chapters on "Digital Communications" and "U.S. Political Communications" soon lack relevance.

The International Online versions of this textbook are designed to address these problems. First, each online edition is co-authored by one or more international media literacy scholars, who translate the text into the appropriate language of their country (including the use of appropriate terminology). These scholars also furnish culturally relevant research, examples, quotes, and statistics. Secondly, the Online International editions contain a "wiki" feature that enables co-authors to update their editions on an ongoing basis.

Currently, there are approximately 40 international editions of the digital text. The network of international co-authors involved in the DIMLE project is made up of distinguished media literacy scholars, whose work continues to make a significant contribution to this emerging field of study. These co-authors are working on a voluntary basis, driven by their passion for media literacy education and their commitment to a theoretical framework that can be shared across cultures. Students will be able to download the eBooks for only $10.00 (U.S.), a significant savings over the inflated cost of print textbooks. However, this price may vary, depending on the relative standard of living characteristic of each country. In addition, because some developing countries may not have the requisite Information Communication Technology (ICT) and Internet facilities, the online editions may also appear in print form. We invite co-authors from countries that are

not yet represented in the project to join our team and co-author country's edition of *Media Literacy: Keys to Interpreting Media Literacy.* (For more information, see our Website: www.DIMLE.org)

Changes Coming...

The Keys to Interpreting Media Messages offer a useful starting point for collaborative scholarship and student projects, including the exchange of media literacy examples, lesson plans, research, and best practices. For instance, one can imagine a project in which Palestinian and Israeli students, using their own editions of the text, examine the media coverage of the diplomatic efforts in the Middle East.

However, it must be stressed that this qualitative approach is *not* intended as a prescriptive model for media literacy education. Thus, the DIMLE project plans to introduce additional qualitative and quantitative approaches to the media literacy analysis. Co-author Art Silverblatt has been focusing attention on the development of qualitative approaches to the analysis of media and media presentations. These qualitative approaches include:

- Ideological
- Mythic
- Autobiographical
- Nonverbal
- Production
- Socratic Approach
- Dream Theory
- Culture Code
- Production Approach
- Memetic Approach
- Values Clarification Approach

Further, individual countries may favor particular approaches to media analysis. For example, while India often employs the "Gandhi approach" to teach media literacy, Thailand uses the "Buddhist Teaching approach" in the analysis of media presentations. Applying approaches commonly employed in one country to media presentations of another culture can, perhaps, provide perspective into that culture. In addition, it might be useful to consider whether media literacy approaches commonly employed in other countries might provide fresh insight into the media presentations of one's own country of origin.

Vision for the next level of Media Literacy

The DIMLE project offers a media literacy framework that forms the foundation of a range of media literacy educational programs, including:

- Elementary and Secondary-level Courses
- Traditional and Online Undergraduate Curricula
- Traditional and Online Graduate Courses

In addition, DIMLE will provide an open portal, where educational resources on international media literacy may be accessed and shared freely by the general public. For instance, the DIMLE resources can be used in nontraditional educational arenas, such as audiences of public broadcasting, older adults, and young children.

DIMLE also hopes to provide a space where media literacy educators can engage in dialogue with policy makers, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and civil society. Some international organizations that promote and assess media literacy include The European Commission (EC), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Independent regulator and competition authority for the UK communications industries (Ofcom), the American Center for Media Literacy (CML), the National Association for Media Education (NAMLE), Canada's Centre for Digital and Media Literacy, and the Australian Communications and Media Authority. ❋

ENDNOTES

1. Media Literacy Resource Guide (Ontario Ministry of Education) Toronto, ON. Canada,1989.

2. *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently…And Why,* Richard E. Nisbett New York, London, Toronto, Sydney: Free Press, 2004.

Media Literacy at a Turning Point

by Sherry Hope Culver

Sherri Hope Culver is an Associate Professor at Temple University, Department of Media Studies and Production and serves as Director of the Center for Media and Information Literacy. She is past-President of the National Association for Media Literacy Education. Sherri is co-editor of the Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue Yearbooks for 2013, 2014 and 2015.

How many times have you heard someone say, "media literacy is at a turning point"? Does it make your eyes glaze over to even read the words? Then let me apologize in advance, because …I think media literacy is at a turning point. I admit my perspective is based on, well, my perspective, and probably like you I have been part of many conversations over the past ten years that began with a hope that finally media literacy was about to tip into mainstream conversations and educational programs. But this time I have evidence. I'm not wishing it would happen; I see it happening.

I've always approached media literacy as a lover of media. I like watching it, playing it, listening to it, and making it. I like downloading music with my daughter and DVR'ing movies with my husband. I've spent most of my career working in the media business and that certainly informs my approach as a media literacy educator. However, my current activities provide me with five distinctly different viewpoints; as a professor in higher education; as the director of a media literacy center within my university; as the past president of a national media literacy organization; as a participant in a global university collaborative and as a consultant to media companies. Each group claims its own goals and its own scope of media literacy, but the commonalities are strong, the challenges are similar and all share a sense that this work has momentum.

At Temple University's School of Media and Communication, I'm an associate professor in the Department of Media Studies and Production. My courses and those of my colleagues are filled with media literacy concepts and activities. Even a brief read of the upcoming fall course list would have any media literacy educator echoing my claim that many courses teach media literacy. Reflecting on the impact of media is a topic that bridges departments (in many universities) from English to Sociology, from Business to International Affairs. This past March the university held its second Teaching with Technology Symposium, a full day event in which media literacy concepts were the focal point of every presentation and keynote. Many of these actions are taking place in other universities as well.

This focus is even more explicitly visible in the Center for Media and Information Literacy (CMIL); a hub for research, outreach, education and professional development at the university. The Center collaborates with students, faculty, and community partners in a variety of environments to help increase understanding of and practice with media and information literacy. When I met with the Director of Curriculum and Assessment for Philadelphia Public Schools recently about developing a media literacy professional development workshop series for teachers she immediately understood the critical need and was eager to find a way to make it

happen. This conversation is indicative of the kinds of conversations I have now. After years of having to explain the need and value of media literacy, conversations now are more likely about how to make it happen, not justifying the need for it to happen at all. This is seen in another project in which the principal of a local high school eagerly engaged the Center to develop a teaching circle in a "train the trainer" model to integrate media literacy throughout the school.

For the past few years the Center has also served as a global chair in media and information literacy through a UNESCO* UNAOC** program with the acronym UNITWIN*** (University Twining and Networking). This program "promotes international inter-university cooperation and networking to enhance institutional capacities through knowledge sharing and collaborative work. "Working with our eight partner universities*** we've collaborated on an international media and information (MIL) yearbook, an online MIL course, and several global conferences. The 2015 conference was held in Philadelphia.

Each partner university has its own array of partnerships and collaborations to build media and information literacy in their country and continent. Associate members build the collaborative possibilities and in the US one such associate member is the National Association for Media Literacy Education.

Between 2008 and 2014, I was proud to serve as president of of the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE). NAMLE strives to offer a "big tent" to the field with a specific focus on how media literacy is taught; how it comes to life in educational environments both inside and outside the classroom. The organization may be best known for its Journal of Media Literacy Education and its bi-annual conference; a cross-disciplinary gathering of educators, practitioners, researchers and media industry leaders who come together to share best practices and explore what it means to be media literate in the twenty-first century. Another example of the growth of media literacy is the number of organizations citing media literacy as a core element of their work. Many of those organizations

are NAMLE members and over the past year that number has doubled.

I see the growth of media literacy in my consulting; working with media networks and production companies to develop content that encourages children to ask questions about the media they consume and life in a digital world, even as they are entertained by it. For years, my conversations with industry executives centered on me trying to persuade them that media literate kids will still watch TV (or play video games, use their mobile devices, etc.) and they could embrace media literacy. Now, my conversations with media executives are more apt to begin when they contact me to discuss creative approaches to integrating media literacy concepts into a creative storyline or social responsibility initiative.

Certainly, there's still a long way to go in all these environments (higher education, research centers, nonprofits, global partnerships and the media industry), but my conversations today are bolder and bigger. I spend less time explaining what media literacy is and more time discussing how to develop a strong media and information literacy initiative.

But these activities only take the field so far. Yes, these examples reflect a positive momentum, but those of you who've been involved in the field for decades know that core elements are still missing. Knowledge of the field may be growing, but without certain key activities, we'll be spinning our wheels in the same dirt road for years to come.

My vision for the field of media and information literacy includes four key actions; some already with progress to show.

1. Legislative mandate: If we want media literacy taught in schools, it's going to have to be a requirement. There's too much pressure on teachers (K12) to cover other subjects; media literacy simply must be part of that core curriculum. There are pockets of activity throughout the country where elected officials are bringing bills forward to make this happen, such as Massachusetts, New York and New Jersey. With the inclusion of media literacy concepts in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) it has been easier to explain the need. Now the states need to

continue that good work and take the lead with this. Certainly a directive from the US Department of Education could push that forward, but will that happen? The momentum is with the states.

2. Teacher Training: Even with legislation in place (or adoption of the CCSS), nothing will change without training the teachers. It is wonderful to hear about positive actions moving media literacy forward, but persistent resistance to setting aside the funds for teacher professional development is frustrating.

Teachers need help figuring out how media literacy fits in their classroom environment or curriculum. This work needs to start in higher education within colleges of education, so new teachers enter school systems with these skills in place. But for the thousands of teachers already in our schools, let's help them be great media literacy educators by helping them to attend local workshops or a summer institute.

3. Foundation support: There are many foundations with a mission to support education, but for some reason media literacy is often excluded from their funding priorities. Why? In the 21st century, media literacy is an important skill for every student. Critical teacher training will not happen without funding and funding isn't going to come from local school districts. Even school districts located in high-income neighborhoods are living with tight budgets. Media literacy is basically an expanded concept of literacy. If foundations will fund "literacy" efforts, media literacy needs to be included.

4. National Cohesion: Imagine the confusion facing a funder or educator who wants to help or get involved in the field. Should they align themselves with digital literacy? News literacy? Information literacy? Media literacy? New media literacy? Should they support this organization or that organization? I'm not suggesting that we omit any focus area or organization; I'm suggesting that our separateness is holding back our common goals. I'm eager for these separate voices to work together and recognize the value in creating a cohesive national voice, even as we appreciate the different approaches.

I'm optimistic about the future of the field, but admittedly, I'm an optimist at heart. At its core,

media literacy is about critical thinking and that's simply not an easily definable concept for a thirty-second (or less) sound-byte. Critical thinking focuses on nuance, point of view and interpretation, while our current educational environment focuses on testing, number two pencils and filled in boxes. But those of us toiling in the field of media literacy aren't about to throw up our hands in defeat. There are best practices to point to, and we need to keep sharing them. There are collaborations yielding success, and we need to repeat them. There are funders supporting programs, and we need to ask for their assistance in leading us to others (and thank them). The momentum is here, now. I can't wait to see what's next. ✼

FOOTNOTES

*UNESCO: United National Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization

**UNAOC: United Nations Alliance of Civilizations

***The UNITWIN university partners (as of the printing of this article) include:
The Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain
Cairo University, Egypt
Tsinghua University, Beijing, China
Temple University, Philadelphia, USA
The University of Sao Paulo, Brazil
Queensland University of Technology, Australia
University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica
Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fez, Morocco
University of Guadalajara, Mexico
Western University, Canada
University of Gothenburg, Sweden
Punjabi University, Patiala, India
University of the South Pacific, Fiji
Hosei University (Japan)
University of South Africa (South Africa)
Nnamdi Azikiwe University (Nigeria)
Ahmadu Bello University (Nigeria)

Spearheading a System Change Through Voluntary Organization, Model Projects and Policy Legislation in the Sacramento Sierra Region Of California

by William Bronston, MD
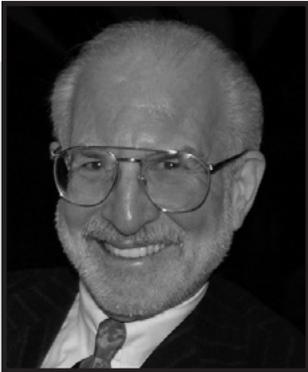
William Bronston, MD A policy physician and progressive organizer, William Bronston was trained at USC School of Medicine, Children's Hospital of LA and Menninger's School of Psychiatry. He served as Medical Director for the CA Department of Developmental Services and the CA Department of Rehab from 1975 - 2004. He is the founder and CEO of 3 nesting non profit (501c3) corporations, the Tower of Youth, founded in 1984, that includes the pre professional youth media industry guild—the Youth Broadcast & Media Association; the regional Sacramento Sierra Digital Arts Studio Partnership and Statewide CA-DASP. Bronston produces biannual major youth movie festivals since 1998, has distributed $2 million in hard and software tool awards to regional youth and educators. (For more information, see www.towerofyouth.org, YBAMA.org, parentdigmedia.org, caldigarts.org)

The Big Picture

Prior to the 20th Century, it made sense to say. "it takes a village to raise a child". But in the 21st Century, we must acknowledge that *it takes a "studio" to raise a child,* for we have entered into the age of Digitalism, a paradigm shift where a revolution in the means of production has overtaken the whole world. Time, space, things, every relationship has been radically altered in a way that causes us to reel and only guess at what new changes lie before us. Infinite change is happening. Our youth are the inheritors, the new landlords of this transformation who must ultimately steward the world's change and leave violence, cruelty, hunger, illiteracy, exploitation, disease, hatred and discriminatory ignorance behind us.

Education as it has been institutionalized through the 20th Century, is genuinely obsolete as the framework for delivering all content. The smart phones that bounce in our kids' pockets dwarf the capacity of teachers to instantaneously provide content. In fact, we have the technical wherewithal to install a complete, meticulously individualized, education plan for every single child entering school formatted to be compelling, definitive and constantly updated. It was the intention of the "Education of All Handicapped Childrens Act, PL 94-142, to establish that profound policy breakthrough with its due process protected model when it was signed into law in November, 1975. It has taken these 35 subsequent years for digital technology to actually be able to make this an augmented entitlement, for every single child, elevating the right to education. The formidable and ecstatic challenge to our education system is how to actually program content and translate it to be used to individualize and fulfill human learning for our present and future.

Policy Change

With such basics clearly derived from emerging digital technology, a number of us set about in 2002 to

imagine and frame model California state legislation, a blue print to describe the systemic collaboration and identify and charge the essential societal stakeholders in the field to address the profound challenge of modernization through policy and program design. Thus, the *Digital Arts Studio Partnership and Workforce Development Act* was passed and signed into law in 2002. Though the statute was stripped of its initial funding, its impact drove the vision and policy for an organizing model that defined 5 large geographic regions throughout the state, to establish a consortium of high schools, post secondary institutions, industry, relevant non-profit sector organizations, the professional media community, and an army of engaged teens. The purpose was to train thousands of youth and adults in "emerging digital arts and technology," legitimizing the system-wide need, and providing a strategy to ensure that mass digital media arts proficiency occurred at the highest level.

In the intervening 12 years, the "Digital Arts Studio Partnership" has been a work in progress with its epicenter in the Sacramento Sierra 8-county region. Without money, the task of marshalling a committed volunteer force had to build upon inspiring the largest number of local media arts educators in the high school community in a way that would overcome difficulty, inexperience, and bureaucratic resistance to the proposed radical change. The invitation to play had to be based on delivering status enhancement, and regional tool capacity building. It had to involve secondary and post secondary teachers, teen youth, parent organization, and partnerships with carefully selected and connected 21st Century industries to impact the participating players and the general public.

Program Innovation Festivals and Project Partnerships

The antecedent program work was begun in 1997 when opportunity allowed us to establish two distinct, annual, youth media festivals. The first, Teen Digital Reel Showcase & Awards (TDR), a spring competition invited 30-second to 5-minute long digital entries from pairs of teens in nine carefully

CA State Fair, YBAMA video team in preproduction mode

defined content categories: Perspectives on the Environment, PSA, Commercial, Short Story Live Action, Short Story Animation, Sports Industry, Beauty and Surrealism, Documentary, Sound Design and Music Video. Each entry required a production portfolio based on industry standards, all of which were juried by a professional group from the region's media industry. $150,000 in donated state of the art software and hardware tools were awarded annually from the generosity of top digital manufacturers to provide major incentives to both teachers to bring their classes into the game and youth to swing their new bats.

The second, a complementary showcase festival, held in the Fall, was a call to every major youth movie origin in the US and Canada to submit entries of their best works - the Annual North American All Youth Film & Education Day. These were juried by a regional all youth group drawn from the most active teens who participated in the TDR. These two dozen kids spent 12 days, and $1500 in pizza, scoring and discussing each entry, 3 minutes to 1 hour in length, selecting the 30–40 winners, then hosting the extraordinary selection of productions to a school day-long, mass youth theater and on-line audience early in October.

Both Festivals, produced by our non-profit, the Tower of Youth, are held on a school day to challenge the education system to take digital media arts very seriously. The day also includes presentations from top movie industry wizards and reps from the top media arts colleges and schools in our state that market their offerings in the magnificent deco theater lobby. Both the Spring *TDR* and *Fall North American all Youth Film and Education Day* have been webcast live, in real time, starting 10 years ago, and then edited into multi DVD packages for distribution and screening to scores of public access TV stations around the US who are starved for quality program content. Over 1200 movies have been showcased and archived before registered teen audiences that exceed 15,000.

> *Education as it has been institutionalized through the 20th Century, is genuinely obsolete as the framework for delivering all content.*

Each year, these two powerful magnet events grew to engage our teachers and hundreds of teens into creative career track action. The teachers and their community allies began meeting quarterly to plan their involvement in the two events and to talk about their pedagogy, overcome the isolation in their classrooms and strengthen their emerging roles as leaders of change in their schools. Between 12 and 24 teachers attended regularly and began to have a transformed relation to each other and the "field" in which they were first generation pioneering educators.

Field Realities

To contextualize for a moment in this story, I must acknowledge the school barriers to technical and curriculum modernization are enormous given that digital media arts is not a required subject and is further limited by the rules of what credit students can use for graduation and GPA calculation for the University of California application in their 4 year high school courses. Students are penalized if they take a third class in "the arts" over the 2 "arts" semesters that they could count for college application. The total number of media teachers in the region provides less than 10% of all schools with a faculty member. Absolutely no reliable data exits, from any source, of the actual numbers of media teachers in the region nor any information about their job stability or course offerings to objectively look at the reality baseline of the emerging field. No formal teaching credential exists in digital media arts, nor Advance Placement credit courses in digital media in California such that each media teacher regularly faces annual "pink slips" as budget shortages and scant progressive administration leadership have plagued the system.

Career Tech Ed, the system redefinition of Vocational Ed and Regional Occupational Programs is still in its infancy, and is the ugly duckling track compared to 'Academic Pathways' for the majority of students in California. The perpetual excuse from administrators that funding digital media was a bank breaker, especially in a non-reimbursed and non-required offering, has cloaked the lack of policy recognition of the revolution that is making obsolete the entire existing 19th Century modus operandi of the school system. The stubborn opposition of leaders in industry and education to integrate digital media arts into the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM acronym) is a flagrant denial of market realities and embeds cultural parochialism and protectionism in our business community.

In schools, fear of the new tools, their crazy learning curves, and constant upgrades, resentment of the dramatic realignment from digital tech in power relations between students and teachers, underpin the resistance to change. Add to that reality the unsupervised abuses of digital tools that have, as yet, not been properly understood by administrations, teachers, parents and the community who are more preoccupied by their negative focus. Legitimate concerns narrowly freeze about predatory access, 'sexting', the gross absorption of time and the

domination of superficial and communication altering practices that are happening in this explosive decade of invention. The old and traditional stakeholders, openly or secretly, hate the problems digital media foists on them for which systemic solutions are lacking or are in uncertain flux. Meanwhile, the majority of students in school are being matriculated digitally illiterate as far as formal pedagogy is concerned, restricted from the miraculous capacities of their mobile devices. In- service and pre-service media arts and technology teacher training is still generally absent. The minuscule number of Media Arts and Technology teacher curriculum programs at the post secondary level in California, and consequent trickle of qualified educators, is a national catastrophe.

Thus, it was critical for us to frame a system strategy, a sector intermediary, non-profit structure, the Digital Arts Studio Partnership, that was able to propel a 21st Century vision, make clear the stakes, and put forward proper policy priorities and a rich and high value program agenda. Then, we set about to draw in the key people and elements in the economy and society to converge and examine how to launch the essential change.

The Youth Broadcast and Media Association Partnership Projects

The Tower of Youth (TOY 501c3) maintained the responsibility of inventing and producing major youth driven projects and organizing all the youth possible into a pre-professional, media industry guild, the Youth Broadcast and Media Association. YBAMA forged work in: • advancing 'studio' club membership development at each high school possible, • publishing a monthly, on-line Creative News with aggressive social media and web communications outreach, • mapping professional development through high quality professional workdays (Theatron) based on survey content priorities from the membership, • fostering liaison relations with many of the professional guilds in the entertainment industry.

From the beginning, TOY and its subsidiary YBAMA worked to launch an array of programs that included the two annual media festivals and galva-

nized partnerships with the region's professional sports media industry—triple A Sacramento River Cats, NBA Kings basketball and a coming pro soccer franchise. Project agreements were struck with the billion dollar, public utility—The Sacramento Municipal Utility District—to produce exemplary movies related to exciting environmental and sustainable energy innovations in every area.

Most exciting has been establishing a major all-youth studio production operation within the 17-day and night CA State Fair each summer. This constructed studio facility was built as both a public attendance exhibit within the Fair, complete with

Will Stinson on camera at Theatron Training

five, 55-inch HD display screens, a green screen venue and multiple post production computer stations to demonstrate youth editing work to the mass public. Meanwhile the exhibition was, in-fact, a staging area to rigorously pre-produce and assign scores of topics for youth video shoots to capture and display on the Fair's website. The Fair was the world with all the, animal, craft competitions, California agriculture, scientific and tech displays, arts, culinary, music events, retail sales, and amusements within the massive million person attended, 600-acre Fair campus. TOY arranged to borrow professional video and sound equipment from our major industry sponsors, such as Panasonic and Best Buy,

to supply the 45 youth volunteers who participated the first year in 2013 and the 100 YBAMA youth that were recruited in 2014. All were professionally supervised by an extraordinary Native American, award-winning producer, Jack Kohler, and his On Native Ground non-profit who contracted with the Fair to create the unprecedented demonstration operation in 2013 and 2014.

All of these groundbreaking programs inject atomic energy, status and consistently keep bringing scores of youth together to meet, refresh membership and build a self conscious career training pathway in media arts.

Media Industry Guild leaders with YBAMA Media Advocacy Team at State Capital for action 6-24-14

An annual Convergence Project Expo has begun to display the gamut of annual activities that teens can adopt over the coming year as a forum for the graduating high school YBAMA seniors to share their leadership wisdom with those present. Most powerful is the flow of youth delivered imagery, ideas, identity affirmation, work force and community engagement opportunities which advocate the value of careers in media arts. Each constituency group thinks through the most important agendas they must pursue to promote their stake in system change. We plot an "ice pick" project strategy aimed to crack the block of the status quo, given the lack of institutional funding or paid staff.

Parent Digital Media Circle

The *3rd District Parent Teacher Association*, an 8-county intermediary official body between the region's school district PTA units and the State PTA, approached the Sacramento Sierra Digital Arts Studio Partnership seeking a formal relationship to help advance a digital media arts and technology conversation and policy within the school system's parent organizations to spearhead digital media advocacy. A formal agreement was established and the *Parent Digital Media Circle (PDMC)* was born. This new body had to relentlessly work to build parent support for their children's digital literacy, career futures and teacher quality and retention. The first task taken on by the embryonic, hybrid organization—the Parent Digital Media Circle (PDMC)—was to establish a definitive roster of every media arts teacher in the 8-county venue of the 3rd District PTA, a task that took over a year and endless hair pulling and frustration at the lack of any reliable source in the system to actually document the teacher core. It was also practically clear that parents have a qualitatively different stake and ability to influence their schools than educators and brought a complementary and strategic voice to the struggle for change.

Once formed, the PDMC opted to inaugurate and host a state-of-the-art, corporate mentored, in-service training and recognition day, the *"Vision Invitational 21st Century Digital Media Professional Workshop and Awards,"* inviting their entire roster of identified media arts teachers who had never assembled, to come together to share a first ever, common professional experience. To this end, the PDMC crafted a partnership with the main Community College School District's Chancellors Office, who administers the 4 Sacramento community colleges. The parents defined a set of eight system outcomes of digital media arts education and sent these with invitations to all the district principals and superintendents, and, county superintendents, to nominate best practices from within their schools, for recognition and for us to then distribute $100,000 worth of industry sponsored tool awards. These best practice outcomes, using digital media, included promoting

academic achievement, creativity, partnerships between high school and college, workforce partnerships, pedagogy research, and policy advancement around Common Core. That parents who took on this pair of tasks carried an immense consciousness raising venture, to all involved. The PDMC meets monthly to plan and search for creative ways to attract membership and have a relevant impact in the evolution of what is happening in the school system. This first set of tasks has become the rallying project to organize parents to engage in their student's future. The annual multiplication of attendance cards from the hundreds of students who participate in our two annual TOY movie festivals and the generally begrudging help of the classroom teachers feeds the pool for PDMC parent membership recruitment.

Independent Professional Educator Organizing Steps

Initially, teacher enthusiasm was nil for a strong, newly organized parent voice, and an independent and regionally organized student guild beyond the limits of the tame and narrow school clubs. Opposition existed against outside stimulation or outside stimulation of their administrators to take a close look and evaluate the realities of digital media education within their school and district jurisdictions. The pressures of mostly solo and isolated teacher roles in their schools with the overwhelming demands from classroom work, providing video coverage of school events, being on call to fix computer problems, responding to constant advances in new technology and recently to common core curriculum technical challenges, over and above their individual dramas with professional recognition, special assignments, family realities, are one-way rails to real burn-out and short tempers, notwithstanding any inherent heroism in their chosen careers.

In an early experiment, we tried to expand teacher buy-in by linking selected high school media programs to a hugely varied set of 12 regional non-profits, the Digital Arts Partnership Project. This was a $50,000 grant funded to showcase the possibilities of a model system-wide collaboration between the two sectors. Using Ning.com to establish an interactive project management system and strategic leadership planning meetings, the 12 teachers received modest stipends, over a semester and summer, to establish and enhance skill sets among student production teams. The students also received stipends upon completion of their production work with their "client" non-profits to produce a needed media product to advance the non-profit's messaging. The obvious simultaneous application to getting community service credit required by many of the students from their schools and the solution to providing affordable PR for the non-profits by supervised media students was a clear win-win set up. At its completion, the beautiful production array was showcased before the invited spectrum of highly varied non profits—energy, theater, legal advocacy, library, homeless youth, exemplars—and student production teams at our local Crocker Art Museum with discussion panels of students, teachers and policy leaders. The intent was to seek a permanent stream of funding and sponsorship to stabilize and grow this economic and social development agenda that is very much a work in progress.

We are all in the struggle to understand and move others where there is no blueprint or prior experience to be certain. And, we have no way out but to proceed with courage, passion and imagination together.

No grass roots professional teacher organization devoted to system-wide, digital media arts and technology existed in our region to create a field recognition and link all the public and private educators together. In 2014, the Teachers, after eight years of quarterly meetings under the aegis of TOY and SSDASP, and the distribution of over $2 million in competitive awards provided through the TOY TDR

Annual Awards, formed their independent *Northern California Media Educators (NCME)* and took over the production of the Annual TOY TDR after 17 years of operation. The objectives of the NCME leadership are to significantly increase regional new teacher participation, create settings for more in-depth, classroom teaching dialogues, expand the range of competitive arenas for student production and awards, and build a professional presence in the schools of a pure media arts educator organization to speak to the burgeoning paradigm shift in pedagogy. Most important, they wanted a forum to be with each other to just talk.

The Campaign for Transformation

The reality of the revolution in education is evident but extremely hard to operationally steward, effectively convey or, let alone, organizationally commandeer. The critical core of this change is occurring within the most profound political developments in global convergence and the challenges in every millimeter of society and the world economy. It resides in the installation and application of digital media, the carrier of all relations whose

Critical mass of youth must not only be in the room when decisions are in progress, they must be challenged and supported to bring real answers to the power structure.

epicenter is in the youth generation. System thinking, the search for visionary collaborations, breakthrough and relentless organizing strategies, the building of trusting and creative diplomatic friendships, critical 24/7 leadership with a strategic and futuristic analysis, powerful inter-sector networking, compelling media materials that convey the stakes and imagery in the change, are a must if we are to save a generation of youth caught in the snafu

of establishment opposition to change.

Money is not the lead lever. Regional models that are linked to overcome isolation and parochialism that generate conscious and competent new thinking constituencies are the urgent priority need of this historical moment. Money will follow resolve! Policy pursuit in every state is the essential strategy to lift the transformative conversation to the highest level of legitimacy that must involve governors, legislators, elected school officials, organized parents and the crucial role that major digital industry scions can play in this complex evolution.

Vertical self interest and fear of the untested are the enemy. Dismissing the creative power inherent in independently organized youth is a key and usual failing. Critical mass of youth must not only be in the room when decisions are in progress, they must be challenged and supported to bring real answers to the power structure. Tradition, mis-prioritized budgeting, ignorance, the speed and magnitude of constant change, protectionism, mis-leadership all play to maintain the status quo or to minimize and distort visions to convene a force willing to implement what is now possible to transform education into an unimaginable force for human being. We are all in the struggle to understand and move others where there is no blueprint or prior experience to be certain. And, we have no way out but to proceed with courage, passion and imagination together. ✳

The Value of Media Literacy Education in the 21st Century:
A Conversation with Tessa Jolls

by Henry Jenkins
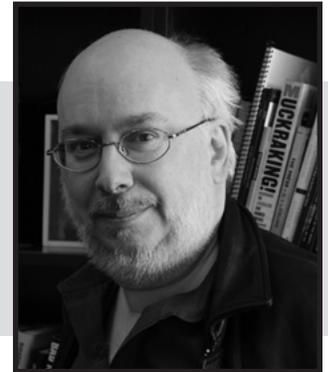
Tessa Jolls has been a long-time advocate of media literacy education in the United States and around the world. I was honored to be able to attend an event last year at which she was presented with the Jessie McCanse Award from the National Telemedia Council in recognition of her lifetime commitment to fostering media literacy. Jolls was one of the very first media literacy advocates to welcome me to the field and to rally behind the work of our New Media Literacies initiative. Since 1999, she has been the President and CEO of the Center for Media Literacy, where she has pushed hard to develop some shared principles and core questions that might inform a diverse array of media literacy initiatives, and where she has shown consistent flexibility and vision in redefining media literacy for the 21st century.

Thus, I was troubled when she told me that she was seeing the Media Literacy movement and the Digital Media and Learning communities talking past each other, often failing to recognize and grab onto moments of potential collaboration. We decided it would be helpful to have a public conversation together which explored some of these issues. Our hope in doing so is that we can expand this discussion to include other media literacy/DML leaders and find ways to be more effective at working together around common concerns.

Across this five part exchange, we talk through core assumptions guiding our work, including dealing with the relationship between research, pedagogy, and practice, the importance of construction and representation as concepts in media literacy work, and how media literacy principles do or do not change as they confront new technologies and new environments. We both threw ourselves—heart and mind—into these e-mail exchanges this past summer and we both learned plenty in the process.

Henry: When I and other researchers from MIT wrote the 2006 white paper, *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century*, we were very aware of building on the foundations of the Media Literacy movement as it had taken shape in North America over the prior several decades.

We made a number of gestures across the paper, which were intended to pay tribute to what had been accomplished, to signal the continuities as well as differences in our vision for the "new media literacies." For example, early in the paper, we emphasized that the newer skills and competencies we were identifying built on the foundation of traditional print-based literacies, core research skills, core technical skills, and media literacies. We wrote, "As media literacy advocates have claimed during the past several decades, students also must acquire a basic understanding of the ways media represen-

tations structure our perceptions of the world; the economic and cultural contexts within which mass media is produced and circulated; the motives and goals that shape the media they consume; and alternative practices that operate outside the commercial mainstream….What we are calling here the new media literacies should be taken as an expansion of, rather than a substitution for, the mass media literacies." (20).

Later, in the document, we do challenge whether some of the core frameworks of the media literacy movement have been adequately framed to acknowledge and take account of instances where young people are themselves producing and circu-

> *"…efforts to penetrate the education system in the U.S. meet with resistance since the system itself is based on a 20th century approach emphasizing content knowledge over process skills and a factory model that is incompatible with the collaborative networks and new curricular approaches needed today."*

lating media, rather than consuming media produced by others, but these were intended as fairly local critiques in recognition of the need to continually re-appraise and reframe our tools to reflect new developments and new contexts. This same passage flags what we saw as some of the core virtues of those same conceptual frameworks: "There is much to praise in these questions: they understand media as operating within a social and cultural context; they recognize that what we take from a message is different from what the author intended; they focus on interpretation and context as well as

motivation; they are not tied up with a language of victimization….One of the biggest contributions of the media literacy movement has been this focus on inquiry, identifying key questions that can be asked of a broad range of different media forms and experiences." (59)

If we flash forward to the current moment, it seems that there remain many mutual misunderstandings between advocates for media literacy (who come from these rich traditions) and newer researchers who have entered the field through the Digital Media and Learning tradition.

I am hoping we can use this conversation as a means of clearing the air and clarifying our mutual perspectives around these topics. I had felt at the time and rereading it now, I still feel, that it was very clear in signaling my enormous respect for all who have come before in promoting media literacy and Tessa, you have been an early and key supporter of my efforts. So, it troubles me to hear of some of the misperceptions you've encountered. Can you share with us some of the things that concern you?

Tessa: I remember well the excitement that I felt when you published your white paper in 2006 (*Confronting the Challenge of Participative Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century*)—it was (and is!) a profound and significant examination of the new media emerging from the technology advances of our time, and a document that contributed great advances to understanding media literacy skills needed in our society. Personally, I've always embraced your work because I see the added-value to the field and how it builds upon and is compatible with what has come before, and I've been puzzled as to why there seem to be rifts when it is far more beneficial to acknowledge our commonality and to leverage it to gain traction in the bigger world of education. Now is an excellent time to reflect and to see "where we are now" and where we might go.

I agree with you, that there are mutual misunderstandings between media literacy advocates who have long practiced in the field and newer researchers who have entered the field through the Digital Media and Learning tradition. Maybe part of the

friction comes simply from the words "new media literacies." By definition, what is not new is now old—and in our society, being "old" is often considered neither attractive nor cutting edge nor fashionable nor relevant. But we need to continue to challenge and confront. When you issued your white paper, it was like you were the town crier shouting, "The British are coming! The British are coming!" Yes, the internet had arrived, along with (and these were cited in the report) Friendster, Facebook, MySpace, message boards, metagaming or game clans… Twitter was yet to come, as well as Tumblr, Snapchat and Instagram and and and….

But in response to your challenge—beyond a small group of media literacy advocates and academic researchers and some concerned parents—most people in the education world particularly were saying "Why should we fight? and "If it's so important, where are all the troops?" Thankfully, the fear surrounding using the internet, the need for tools of discernment—and the genuine opportunities that the internet and social media present to empower people—have helped instill in the public more of a sense of urgency that has propelled renewed interest in media literacy education.

BUT because media literacy education has been ignored and neglected in schools through the years, there was no foundation laid for why media literacy is important, for its foundational concepts and for how to deliver the pedagogy (more on the foundation needed later). There were few if any troops to call on to be able to deliver media literacy education—very few had been taught, and no one could then teach it on the mass scale that is needed. And efforts to penetrate the education system in the U.S. met with resistance since the system itself is based on a 20th century approach emphasizing content knowledge over process skills and a factory model that is incompatible with the collaborative networks and new curricular approaches needed today.

One response to the frustrations of dealing with the education system was—and is—to put technology in the hands of the youth and have faith that they will figure it all out. Using the technolo-gy approach, the iPhone is the "school" and anyone who uses it adeptly is the master and anyone over 30 is, well, handicapped at best. New technologies enable this approach because now, hardware and software are available and production has been democratized—everyone is a producer, a collaborator, a distributor and a participant. While experiential and project-based learning is truly exciting and an important component of media literacy, it is not synonymous because the outcome of the technology approach is often limited to technical proficiency without critical autonomy. Whether using an iPad, a pencil or a videocam, pressing the right buttons is important but not enough! This is where many media literacy advocates, including myself, feel that the train has left the station because some researchers, educators and parents, too, think that just learning to use the technology is enough (they probably don't know about or have access to alternatives) and they pursue technology projects with no credible media literacy components.

Henry: What's in a name? Nothing but headaches, it would seem.

MacArthur was pretty committed to the phrase, New Media Literacies, so we worked hard to try to figure out what kind of meaning to attach to it. We grappled with the issue of whether the emphasis should be the *New* Media Literacies, the *New Media* Literacies, or the New *Media Literacies*. I did want to signal continuities with the Media Literacy movement, so it did not seem altogether a problematic term, but I was also worried about the connotations you describe here. This is one reason why I was so explicit that we were not leaving behind traditional literacies, media literacy, research skills, or technical skills, but that what we were describing were an added layer or an extension of each that now needed to be factored into our consideration of what an ideal curriculum looked like. I did not want to imply that these skills were entirely *new*—many were things we should have and some of us had been teaching all along—nor were they exclusively about *new media* per se. We've always insisted that these were not technical skills but rather social skills and cultural

competencies, and that these were things that can be taught in low tech or no tech ways (and should be, rather than waiting for low income schools to catch up in terms of their technical infrastructure before introducing these literacies into the curriculum.) Despite having spent much of my career at MIT, I have worked hard to avoid any and all forms of technological determinism.

Still, there's some power to attaching yourself to the digital revolution rhetoric (as well as many pitfalls) insofar as it provides some urgency to the message, but ultimately I frame these skills in relation to the idea of a participatory culture rather than in terms of digital change. This is also why I have had reservations all along about MacArthur's

> *"We find that when we do workshops for teachers and students, they often anticipate that technologies are going to be much more central to our work than they are. Our first task is always to achieve that shift from a focus on technologies to a focus on culture."*

phrase, Digital Media and Learning, since it implies that we are interested only or exclusively in digital media, and that has never been my focus. Keep in mind both that I wrote the white paper in the wake of writing *Convergence Culture*, which was all about "Where old and new media collide," and that it emerged from the context of the Comparative Media Studies program, which studied the interplay across media. We find that when we do workshops for teachers and students, they often anticipate that technologies are going to be much more central to our work than they are. Our first task is always to achieve that shift from a focus on technologies to a focus on culture.

I share your concern that in many cases, we are now bringing technologies into the classroom as if doing so would substitute for a more comprehensive approach to media literacy. As Liz Losh notes in her recent book, the focus on technology turns media education into something that can be sold—like getting whole school districts to buy iPads—and can be purchased from the school budget, rather than something which as the white paper suggests, should require a fundamental paradigm shift in the ways we teach all school subjects.

That said, I got into some trouble with the original white paper in reducing the rich kinds of conceptual models that surround, say, the Computer Club House movement to purely technical skills comparable to penmanship (Sorry Mitch). Most of the work which gets presented at the DML conference is about the fusion of hands-on technical processes, whether tied to hacking, games-based learning, the Maker movement, etc., with rich conceptual frameworks which are intended to allow people to understand at a deeper level how the constraints and affordances of digital media impact the world around us. To me, this is a kind of media literacy, though less tied to notions of representation or messaging than previous kinds of media literacy work has promoted. If one does not displace the other, they certainly can co-exist within a more comprehensive model which considers the nature of platforms and programming alongside the questions about who produces which representations for which audiences with which motives.

In many ways, what we were trying to do with the white paper was to build a coalition which would include people interested in engaging with new media platforms and practices, people committed to promoting media literacy, and teachers seeking new ways to animate the teaching of their disciplines. Where our work has been successful, we have brought together these interests. Such an approach has tended as you suggest here to pull media literacy advocates into more active engagement with notions of media change and new technologies, but it also has the intent to draw people who want to teach using new technology to confront the participation

gap, the transparency issues, and the ethical challenges we identify in the white paper and through doing so, to pull media literacy more actively into their teaching practice. ❉

COMMENTS

1. Carol Tizzano says:
September 13, 2014 at 1:36 pm
I so appreciate this exchange and the light it sheds on our core critical issues.

Teaching art in the public schools for the last twenty-five years, while also doing media literacy education for educators and youth mostly beyond the public school setting, media literacy is mostly off the radar. A handful of folks within schools choose to address it here and there—but framing it as something foundational is sorely missing. Fast forward to rapidly shifting technologies and the tendencies for schools that are under-funded to lag behind, everyone is just trying to keep up with technology changes. Acquiring and using semi-current technologies is the focus. Framing that use is largely missing. While there are so many relevant themes addressed within circles practicing digital media literacy and more traditional media literacy education—addressing the foundational content and practice identified by CML's Core Concepts and Key Questions remains essential. Similarly, the Core Principles provided by NAMLE serve as an exceptional foundation. For me, promoting these foundations within K-12 education and beyond is our core and most pressing work. The disconnect between what happens at the university level and within media lit communities and the k-12 world further fuels the absence of MLE within schools and beyond. Too often we are talking with each other and not reaching widely.

Thanks to both of you for this enormously thoughtful and critical dialogue!! I look forward to more!

2. Ethan Delavan says:
September 15, 2014 at 1:26 am
Henry & Tessa, thanks so much for this frank discussion. It's such a breath of fresh air on what can be so easily fraught with misunderstanding. I'm forwarding this on to our librarians and tech teachers here at The Bush School. We're in the midst of trying to articulate to content-area teachers what media literacies have come to mean, and this hits more than one nail on the head!

3. Neil Andersen says:
September 18, 2014 at 2:14 pm
This discussion is important to everyone because we all live in a mediated environment. As Tessa stated, "the outcome of the technology approach is often limited to technical proficiency without critical autonomy." The affordances of personal devices and connected environments can enrich education and personal lives immensely, but they require mindfulness—specifically of their maximized, appropriate and ethical uses. We are still catching up to that mindfulness, and I am grateful to Henry and Tessa for their contributions.

The Association for Media Literacy (Ontario) is also trying to support that catch-up with Understanding Media Now (http://www.aml.ca/understandingmedianow/), an October 18 conference that acknowledges the shifting media and social environments and calls for strategies to understand and benefit from them.

I look forward to the next installments of this discussion.

See more at: http://henryjenkins.org/2014/09/the-value-of-media-literacy-education-in-the-21st-century-a-conversation-with-tessa-jolls-part-one.html#st-hash.JS67lMod.dpuf

Blowing the Roof Off the Twenty-First Century

by Robert W. McChesney
2014, Monthly Review Press, New York

Reviewed by Martin Rayala

H ow can you not be attracted to a book that talks about blowing the roof off the 21st century? Robert McChesney (see his article in this issue) practices a brand of media literacy that attacks the social and political implications of media. He and the Free Press carefully followed the battle over free access and control of the Internet. In this book, he foresees a post-capitalist democracy necessary for a very different and far superior world than we have. He lays out an argument for interceding in the downward spiral of our society created by the tyranny of the wealthy and privileged.

At its root, McChesney's argument is that we need to decouple our ideas about Democracy from our ideas about Capitalism – they are not the same. McChesney argues that the derailed and exploited Capitalist system controlled by powerful corporations is keeping us from realizing the Democratic ideals we seek.

McChesney's progressive ideas put him in the cross-hairs of the same powerful, wealthy, capitalist elite he blames for the economic, social and political destruction of our democratic way of life. The Capitalist Elite will go after McChesney, as they have with Noam Chomsky, Ralph Nader and Howard Zinn, to undermine his message by any means possible – and they have dangerously powerful means. McChesney says, "Political players who do not correspond to the range of legitimate debate (that is, the range counte-nanced by capital) simply disappear from the official record."

One of the stories he tells in the book is what he calls "The Wisconsin Uprising" when, in 2011, teachers and others rose up against Governor Scott Walker's attack on unions. He says that everyone involved knew something special was happening in regard to a sense of solidarity and hope directed toward social justice. McChesney says the defining political story of our time is that "the gap between the concerns of the masses and the solutions countenanced by the corporate-run political system are wider than at any point in generations."

McChesney says "We have to understand that the political crisis of our times is at its core an economic crisis." The platform of progressive policies including issues like universal single-payer health care, cuts in military spending, guaranteed employment at a living wage, conversion to green jobs and a green economy, massive infrastructure spending, trade unions for workers, expansion of public education, free higher education, and expansion of Social Security, are denigrated by Corporate Powers as socialist. McChesney says that liberals, progressives and socialists have to plan together to cut down corporate power while working in a capitalist system or adopting a social democracy model such as in Scandinavia. He says we must be open to the possibility that capitalism itself may prove to be a barrier to any meaningful reform and might need to be replaced with a different economic system better suited to the needs of humanity.

Noam Chomsky says McChesney's work is of extraordinary importance. I think that history might just prove him right. ✻

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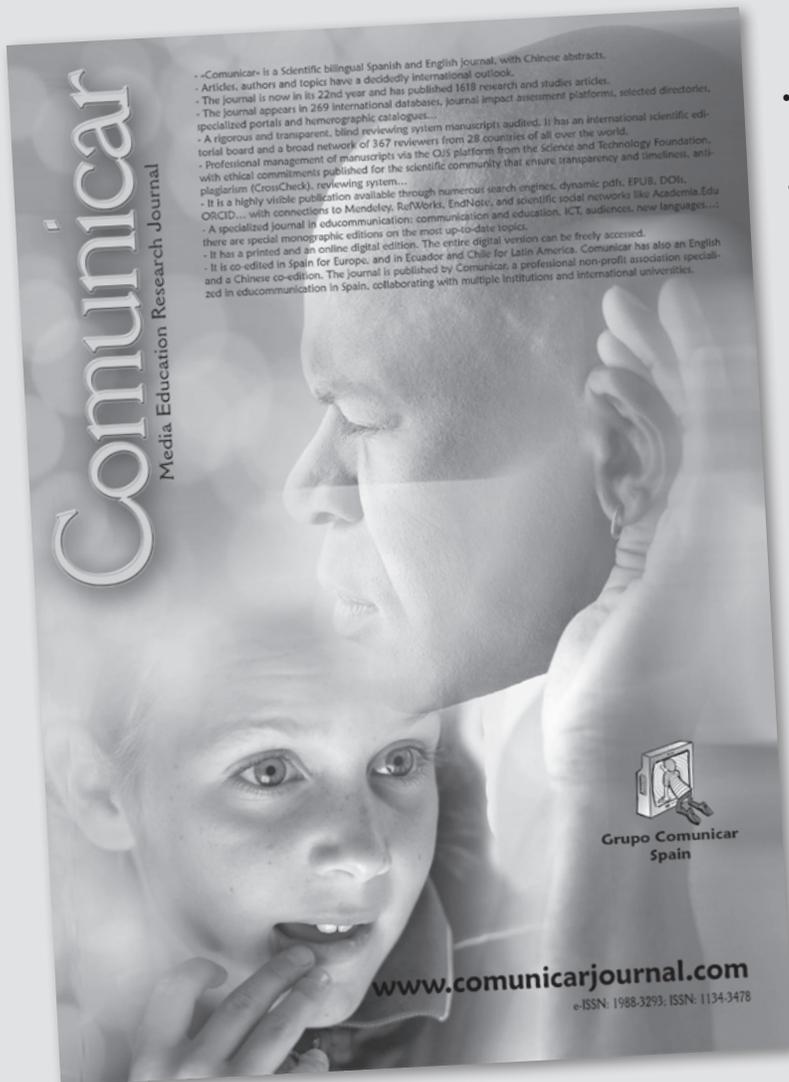
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