MEDIA LITERACY

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Summary

The concept of media literacy has been circulating in the United States and Europe since the beginning of the 20th century as a means to acknowledge the set of knowledge, skills and habits of mind required for full participation in a contemporary media-saturated society. The concept continues to morph and change as a result of rapid changes in digital media, mass media, social media, popular culture, and society. There are a number of competing approaches to media literacy in the United States and around the world. But the acquisition of digital and media literacy competences cannot be conceptualized merely as a set of technical and operative skills; rather, these competencies are embedded in a process of cultural change.

Empowerment and protection have long been identified as the two overarching themes in the media literacy education community, reflecting a dynamic and generally productive tension between those who see media literacy education as a means to address the harms, risks challenges of growing up in a media- and technology-saturated cultural environment and those who see media literacy as a tool for personal, social, cultural and political empowerment. Contributing to these distinctive perspectives is the rise of a community of scholars and practitioners who are conceptualizing media literacy as an expansion of literacy, which has traditionally been understood as the sharing of meaning through spoken and written language. Media literacy can also be understood as a form of advocacy or a social movement, aimed in particular at young adults, children and parents; and those who see it as a specialized academic field associated with either media studies or education. A set of key concepts and core principles developed as a result of increased contact among members of the media literacy community through national and international conferences and increased publication in academic journals. These concepts emphasized the relationship between authors and audiences, messages and meanings, and representation and reality. Among educational practitioners and scholars, an interest in media literacy pedagogy has developed to explore how critical analysis of media texts, tools and technologies is integrated into elementary, secondary and higher education, as well as in libraries, museum and other informal learning settings. As media literacy has entered the education and cultural system, a number of policy issues have emerged. The rise of media literacy in Europe, led by a mandate from the European Commission, has exacerbated and interest in examining policy issues that either support or limit the implementation of media literacy education in relation to economic development or the preservation of cultural heritage. Today, media literacy initiatives occurs in many nations and it is evident that differences in cultural values, press freedoms, media systems, education structures, education policy, and media technology all shape the specific direction, goals, implementation and assessment of media literacy initiatives.

Keywords

media literacy, media education, digital literacy, media, education, technology, curriculum, instruction, competencies, skills

Media Literacy

The concept of media literacy has been circulating in the United States and Europe since the beginning of the 20th century but it is a concept that continues to morph and change as a result of changes in education, digital media, mass media, popular culture, and society. Media literacy is widely understood as the knowledge, competencies and life skills needed to participate in contemporary society through accessing, analyzing, evaluating and creating media messages in a wide variety of forms. There are a number of approaches to media literacy now in wide circulation in the United States and around the world, each with a distinctive name and conceptual framework. Media literacy can be understood as the outcome of the practice of media literacy education. In some contexts, the broader term media education is used to refer to all contexts where learning about media occurs.

The most widely used definition of media literacy emerged from the Aspen Institute, which brought together a group of media literacy experts in 1993 to define media literacy as "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create media in a variety of forms" (Aufderheide, 1993). This definition has been used in most scholarly and practitioner discourse on media education in the United States. In Europe, the term *media education* was used through the 1990s by scholars, policymakers and practitioners, who defined it as "providing the critical knowledge and the analytical tools that will empower media consumers to function as autonomous and rational citizens" (Khan, 2008, p. 15).

Some scholars view media literacy primarily as a set of knowledge structures about media effects, media content, media industries, the real world, and the self (Potter, 2004). In this view, knowledge about media increases awareness during information-processing tasks and leads to better decisions about seeking out information, working with that information, and constructing meaning from it. Others see media literacy not as a set of facts or information, but as a process that involves asking critical questions, reflection as well as social and civic action, in addition to competencies in accessing, analyzing and creating media (Hobbs, 2010b). As RobbGrieco notes in his history of media literacy in the United States, "the conceptual contours of meaning, theory, and application of the basic definition and the terms within it have been continuously contested and employed in very different ways by scholars and practitioners with different disciplinary and institutional interests" (2015, p. 5). Over 30 years, a variety of terms have been promulgated that aim to capture the full constellation of habits of mind, knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary for full participation in contemporary, media-saturated society.

A variety of new terms (cyber literacy, new literacies, digital literacy, web literacy, transliteracy, etc.) have been suggested in order to update and revamp the concept of media literacy in order to address changes in technology and new approaches to the creation, distribution and dissemination of media messages. As more stakeholders find appeal in the concept of media literacy, each group seeks to name it to reflect their distinctive interests. For example, RobbGrieco and Hobbs (2012) identified eleven stakeholder groups each aligned with particular related themes, including information literacy, visual literacy, youth media, digital literacy, news literacy, broadband adoption,

digital media and learning, digital ethics and online safety, critical media literacy, media reform, and media and public health. These strands may emphasize certain aspects of media literacy and neglect other aspects. Only recently have scholars begun to construct a comprehensive history of the ideas, practices, and discourses that have produced the field.

Theories of Media Literacy

Media literacy has been conceptualized in relation to four primary theoretical positions: as a means to counter the negative effects of mass media; as a way to counter the hegemonic power of mass media; as a way to recognize the structure and constructed nature of media messages; and as a way to acknowledge the role of play, identity, voice and subjectivity in the practices of consuming and creating media. Each of these four traditions has its adherents and detractors, which has contributed to some of the "great debates" in the field (Hobbs, 1998).

The *media effects tradition* has long been aligned with media literacy, as researchers who examine the impact of media on attitudes, beliefs and behaviors conceptualize media literacy as a means to minimize the negative consequences of media violence, stereotyping, or materialism. Media literacy is positioned as a way to solve the problem of children and young people, who are acknowledged to be a vulnerable audience who can be duped or misled by media messages from advertising, news and Hollywood. In this view, audiences are vulnerable to negative media messages and media users must gain knowledge and skills in order to resist media influence and attain a critical distance from the overwhelming symbolic environment of media. It's been claimed that this theoretical framework presents a deficit model of learners. But advocates for this position say it is responsive to the real needs of parents and educators as they see children's active imitation and uncritical acceptance of the values presented in mass media and popular culture. In a comprehensive meta-analytic assessment of 51 studies, Jeong, Cho and Hwang (2013) found a substantial overall effect size of media literacy interventions on outcomes including media knowledge, criticism, perceived realism, influence, behavioral beliefs, attitudes, self-efficacy, and behavior. Researchers found that intervention effects did not vary by the agent, target age, the setting, audience involvement, the topic, the country, or publication status.

The *critical cultural studies tradition* has embraced media literacy as a means to theorize the audience of mass media as passive dupes of the culture industries. In this view, the mass audience consumes the products of the culture industries, which reproduce power relations in favor of those who control the means of production. The mass audience finds the products of the culture industry (movies, music, and the like) both irresistible and inescapable; the audience cannot help but delight in seeing itself reproduced in the endless variation of representations in capitalist mass production. But media products alienate the masses from the means of production of their own culture and suppress critical thinking on the part of the audience by producing a spectacular demand for automatic cognitive processing. Audiences may like the pleasures of feeling superior to mass media and popular culture. It makes them feel like experts. But critical theorists scorn this pleasure, positing that it produces a false consciousness in the mass audience (Bourdieu, 1993). Media literacy education that pulls back the curtain on the political economy of the media helps audiences to become capable of resisting dominant discourses through oppositional meaning-making (Lewis and Jhally, 1998). Assuming

that corporate media institutions perpetuate injustices, students are encouraged to identify sexist, racist, hetero-normative, and class-biased media messages and representations and create their own media messages to counter these representations (Kellner & Share, 2005). Students can also become "critical" through pursuing information and entertainment produced by independent and diverse sources.

The *rhetorical tradition*, developed by scholars in the humanities, has long recognized the importance of language and other symbol systems as a structuring tool for human thought and action. People have been debating whether media emancipate us or are forms of social control for 2,500 years, beginning with the transition from oral to written culture. The argument goes back to ancient times, with questions like these: How does our use of symbol systems like language and images shape social relationships? What is gained and what is lost with the strategic use of language and other symbols as tools for expression, persuasion and advocacy? How can symbol systems be used to express, distort or misrepresent our sense of personal identity, the value of social relationships, and our understanding of reality? During the 20th century, the rise of structuralism and poststructuralism created renewed interest in these questions, exploring the relationship between language and other symbol systems as they relate to perception, cognition and meaning-making. In the field of communications, Marshall McLuhan was perhaps the foremost scholar within this tradition. By practicing an inquiry approach to media, McLuhan theorized that learners might shift perspective on the media environment in order to assess what is gained and lost through our uses of media technologies—in order to ultimately act more strategically about media use.

In the *American cultural studies* tradition, audiences are conceptualized as active, not passive, engaged in the creative work of meaning making. Media literacy competencies include those related to play, identity, voice and subjectivity in the practices of consuming and creating media. Research on highly engaged audiences, including fans, has been critical to the development of this line of argument. Media literacy scholars acknowledge the "multiple sets of discursive competencies" that media fans access "by virtue of more complex and contradictory places within the social formation" (Jenkins, 1992, p. 34). For Jenkins, media fans are cultural nomads who constantly move between various texts and identity positions to find and work on meanings to meet their social and personal needs and interests. This flexibility has made fans a model of the active audience for theorists working with the idea that culture is produced by the people from the bottom up as well as from the top down by powerful institutions like mass media. Educators aligned with this theoretical position may engage learners through the use of digital tools like blogs, wiki, and video to promote reading comprehension, creative writing and media composition skills (Kinszer & Leander, 2003; Lankshear & Knobel, 2007).

In an attempt to synthesize these four theoretical stances, a set of key concepts and core principles developed among members of the media literacy community through national and international conferences and increased publication in academic journals. Developed by the National Association for Media Literacy Education in 2007, these principles include: (1) media literacy education requires active inquiry and critical thinking about the messages we receive and create; (2) media literacy education expands the concept of literacy to include all forms of media (i.e., reading and writing); (3) media literacy education builds and reinforces skills for learners of all ages. Like print literacy,

those skills necessitate integrated, interactive, and repeated practice; (4) media literacy education develops informed, reflective and engaged participants essential for a democratic society; (5) media literacy education recognizes that media are a part of culture and function as agents of socialization; and (6) media literacy education affirms that people use their individual skills, beliefs and experiences to construct their own meanings from media messages.

Contested Issues in Media Literacy

Terminology and Framings. Media literacy has been a concept that is understood and applied differently across a range of academic and scholarly discipline, including education, communication/media studies, psychology, technology studies, and public health. Terms like author, audience, meaning, representation and text have also expanded from their earlier formulation focused on writers and writing towards the inclusion of forms of expression and communication that include visual, audiovisual, sound, interactive and digital formats and modes (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000). The term digital literacy is beginning to be used to represent the technical, cognitive and social competencies, knowledge and skills needed to communicate effectively and participate in the contemporary knowledge economy. The American Library Association has defined digital literacy as "the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, understand, evaluate, create and communicate digital information. Basic reading and writing skills are foundational; and true digital literacy requires both cognitive and technical skill" (American Library Association, 2012).

Empowerment and Protection. The ongoing dialectic of empowerment and protection reflects a complex dynamic in how audiences are positioned in relation to media, technology and culture. When audiences are positioned as vulnerable, media literacy offers a form of education that aims to protect them. When audiences are positioned as active, media literacy embraces a conceptualization of them as creative and capable. In a systematic review of over 150 empirical studies in the field, Martens (2010) notes that many communication scholars position media literacy education as a protective solution to the problem of negative media effects like media violence, gender and racial stereotyping, and bias in the news. By contrast, scholarship in education often positions media literacy in relationship to youth empowerment, emphasizing concepts including voice, agency, popular culture, and relevance (Alvermann, 2011). Empowerment and protection have long been identified as the two overarching themes in the media literacy education community, reflecting a dynamic and generally productive tension between those who see media literacy education as a means to address the complexities and challenges of growing up in a media- and technology-saturated cultural environment and those who see media literacy as a tool for personal, social, cultural and political empowerment.

In North America and in some European and Asian countries, media literacy advocates are generally aligned with parents, educators, scholars, health professionals and cultural critics who are frustrated by the ever-growing role of media and technology in the lives of children and youth. Issues of concern may include aggression and cyberbullying; gender and racial stereotypes; bias, gossip and sensationalism in the news; pornography, sexting and online sexual behavior; videogame and mobile media addiction; materialism and the commercialization of childhood; the rise of celebrity culture; and changing conceptualizations of personal and social identity in relation to the

Internet and social media (Frau-Meigs & Torrrent, 2009). These issues offer profound challenges to the practice of raising children and educating youth in contemporary society. In particular, media literacy is conceptualized as a means to address the particular challenges associated with growing up in an always-on wireless broadband environment in an era when parental control and government regulation are thought to be of limited value (Livingstone, Haddon, Gorzig & Olafsson, 2011).

Media literacy is sometimes conceptualized as a form of protection in response to a "wide range of potentially negative effects on individuals" (Potter, 2010, p. 681). Some are motivated by a sense that unrestrained capitalism has victimized children and young people, crafting techniques to titillate youth with sex and violence and infiltrating and shaping children's online social and emotional worlds to compel them to spend more and more time online (Bakan, 2011). Scholars working from within the media effects paradigm have also made considerable progress in exploring how media literacy may mitigate the negative impact of media messages on attitudes and behavior. Several studies have examined how media literacy education programs improve health outcomes, including substance abuse prevention (Austin, Pinkleton, Hurt & Cohen, 2005), smoking (Banerjee & Greene, 2007), and aggressive behavior (Byrne, 2009; Scharrer, 2005; 2006; Webb, Martin, Afifi & Kraus, 2010). Other studies have shown how media literacy education affects adolescents' knowledge and attitudes regarding sexuality (Pinkleton, Austin, Cohen, Chen & Fitzgerald, 2008), as well as racial and gender stereotypes (Ramasubramanian, 2007; Irving & Helsper, 2006).

As children and young people spend more time online, their exposure to potential risks and harms also grows. Livingstone and her colleagues have differentiated these risks, consider those primarily focused on content (messages from media), conduct (behavior using media tools) and contact (social interaction through media). Videogames and online social media, like traditional mass media and popular culture before it, are being framed in terms of both the opportunities and risks they offer to children and young people. In a large multi-national study of aimed at understanding European children's risky and safer uses of the Internet, the EU Kids Online project discovered that, contrary to much of the rhetoric offered by scholars and technology specialists, children and young people with more digital skills have a greater likelihood of exposure to risks, including identity theft, cyberbullying, exposure to hate sites, self-harm sites, sexual images and pornography, violations of privacy, unwanted exposure to advertising, and more (Livingstone, Haddon, Gorzig & Olafsson, 2011). While recognizing the importance of promoting media literacy education in schools, researchers have found that simply teaching digital skills will not necessarily reduce online risk. To address these issues, service learning or community advocacy approaches emphasize the role of discussion, facilitated by young adults who work with younger children to explore mass media and popular culture in ways that activate awareness and support the development of metacognitive and reflective thinking (Cooks & Scharrer, 2007).

Expanded Conceptualization of Literacy. Another community of scholars and practitioners conceptualize media literacy as an expansion of literacy, which has traditionally been understood as the sharing of meaning through spoken and written language. Support among literacy educators for the practice of media literacy education has been a major factor in the rise of media literacy education in the United States. In this view, literacy is no longer confined to the domain of printed language. New forms of

expression and communication are displacing the primacy of print language (Kress, 2003). The rise of interest in multiple literacies has emerged from a need to better respond to globalization and citizenship in contemporary society (Kellner and Share, 2005). Because social media tools and platforms have enabled group collaboration and community dialogue, audiences have become producers, and the gap between productive literacies and receptive literacies has narrowed. Text, images, graphics and other design elements are considered modes, or culturally shaped resources for meaning making, that may activate linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, spatial and multimodal patterns of meaning. These modes are dynamic and interconnected; the combination of modes may create new meanings (Gee, 2003).

Literacy educators have begun to rediscover the role of media literacy in the history of writing instruction in the 20th century. There are important connections between visual production and alphabetic reading and writing, as writing teachers used the instructional strategy of producing media to encourage critical analysis, promote creativity and invention, consider the relationship between image and word, and destabilize concepts of linearity and originality through the application of concepts like assemblage and remix (Palmieri, 2012). Although "print-based text is in no way endangered, it now interacts with digital technologies and multimodality to create more complex texts," and learners engagement with these materials can be explored through an examination of the interpretive communities and affinity groups which develop as those who have similar interests learn from each other with digital texts, tools and technologies (Carrington & Robinson, 2009, p. 5). Literacy practices are embedded in the contexts of sharing among knowledge communities, where literacy strategies and informational content are seen as mutually supportive and inextricably linked. Theories of literacy also explore practices of creative collaboration, inspired by Vygotsky's work on apprenticeship, to understand the process of intellectual interdependence as learners do not merely absorb messages in the cultural environment, but actively co-construct them (Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000). Thus, literacy practices are shifting from a focus on individual behavior to a focus on collaborative, social activity where the widespread availability and circulation of texts creates opportunities for many different forms of shared cultural participation and yet also demands increased levels of intellectual curiosity, critical analysis and creative expression.

Academic Field or Social Movement. While some consider media literacy to be type of advocacy or social movement, aimed in particular at young adults, children and parents, others see it as a specialized academic field associated with either media studies or education. Media literacy is conceptualized as both a social movement and as an academic field. Social movements arise in response to changing social norms and values (Blumler, 1969) as a form of political participation where people engage in a sustained public effort to make social change, using communicative action to raise awareness, build strategic alliances, and, ultimately, to challenge and reform some aspects of contemporary culture. Academic fields generally emerge when those working at the intersections of existing disciplines find the need to reconfigure themselves into a distinct discourse community with shared vision, goals and passion for creating new knowledge (Lauter, 1999). Emergent knowledge communities develop a collective body of foundational knowledge that provides boundaries for a theoretical, methodological and

evaluative framework and an infrastructure for dialogue, debate and the dissemination of knowledge (Dirks, 1996).

Those who see media literacy as a social movement are generally motivated by their awareness that only changes in audience behavior can bring about changes in the media industry. A wide variety of small groups, non-profit organizations and other individuals advocate for media literacy at the local and community levels. While this approach to media literacy has been roundly criticized as a form of moral, cultural or political defensiveness (Buckingham, 2003), it continues to have traction in the United States and some other countries, especially in relation to the ever-changing forms of contemporary digital technology, mass media and popular culture. For example, when reality TV programs such as *Survivor, American Idol* and *Jersey Shore* became a staple of American popular culture, a New York City school principal observed his own students frequently reenacting some of the aggressive and mean-spirited behaviors depicted on some reality shows. Certain behaviors have become more acceptable to students who watch these shows, noting that students may see these aggressive, attention-getting actions as the closest possibility they have to becoming famous. For these reasons, young people need opportunities to discuss and analyze problematic media representations with parents, teachers and other caring adults (Pozner, 2011). A number of youth and media advocacy groups are allied with the social movement conceptualization of media literacy. For example, as part of their advocacy efforts for media literacy, Girl Scouts USA conducted survey research with girls ages 11 -17, finding that about half of the sample are regular viewers of reality TV shows and that regular viewers accept and expect a higher level of drama, aggression and bullying in their own lives (Girl Scouts USA, 2011).

Those who see media literacy as an academic field include an international group of scholars with interests in the intersection of media studies, education and human development (Cappello, Felini & Hobbs, 2011b). The essential components of media literacy pedagogy involve the processes of accessing, analyzing, composing, reflecting and taking action in ways that activate creativity, collaboration, critical thinking and communication skills (Barron, Levinson, Martin, Mertl, Strong, & Rogers, 2010; Hart & Hicks, 2002; Hobbs, 2006; Lemke, 2006; Rheingold, 2008; Tyner, 2004). As an academic field, the general emphasis is on the development of interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks and the implementation and evaluation of practical programs that enable children and young people to learn about all forms of mass media, popular culture and digital media as a dimension of an expanded conceptualization of literacy. In both school and non-school settings, practitioners generally implement and develop programs based on their own interests and motivations for media literacy in relationship to the unique needs of their students (Hobbs, 2011a), resulting in highly varied practice that includes the use of digital media, discussions about and exploration of advertising, news, and entertainment media, generally paired with some form of informal or formal media production activities, including video production.

Reflecting a conceptualization of literacy as consisting of both "reading" and "writing," those who see media literacy as an academic field tend to emphasize the instructional or pedagogical values associated with the habits of mind linked to critical analysis of mass media, digital media and popular culture, especially when combined with media composition activities involving visual, print, sound and digital media tools

and technologies (Beach, 2007). Instead of viewing media literacy as a social movement, it is seen here as a distinct set of pedagogical practices (including close analysis of media 'texts,' cross-media comparison, keeping a media diary, and multimedia composition) that help learners build awareness of the constructedness of the media and technology environment, deploy strategies useful in the meaning-making process, understand the economic, political and historical context in which media messages circulate, and appreciate the ways messages influence attitudes and behavior (Wilson, Grizzle, Tuazon, Akyempong & Cheung, 2011).

Theoretically, the academic field approach may be aligned with one or more of the four theoretical frameworks that reflect a fundamental re-articulation of the "active audience" tradition. Scholars and educators in media literacy generally work at the intersections of existing disciplines, including communication, education, human development, technology studies, sociology, literacy education, art history, technology/information policy, writing and rhetoric, library and information studies, journalism, social work and other fields.

At the present time, there are a set of overlapping and distinct discourse communities associated with media literacy, each reflecting the shape of various established disciplinary traditions. Critical literacy and new literacies scholars may see themselves as distinct in relation to those with interests in information literacy or digital learning, for example, with each group having a set of core texts that serve as foundational to their work (Hobbs, 2010b; Lemke, 2006; Tyner, 2004). However, as a result of the rise of interdisciplinary scholarship over the past ten years, more and more scholars in the fields of English education and media studies are reading and building on each others' work (Beach, 2007). In 1996, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) endorsed a resolution that "viewing and visually representing are a part of our growing consciousness of how people gather and share information. … Teachers should guide students in constructing meaning through creating and viewing nonprint texts." As a result of interdisciplinary mingling, a set of foundational concepts regarding authors and audiences, messages and meanings, and representation and reality are widely shared (Hobbs, 2006). These concepts support and extend scholarship and provide an infrastructure for dialogue and debate across knowledge communities.

Teaching With and About Media

Among educational practitioners and scholars, an interest in media literacy pedagogy has developed to explore how critical analysis of media texts, tools and technologies is integrated into elementary, secondary and higher education, as well as in libraries, museum and other informal learning settings. Over the past few decades, the inquiry-focused approach to media literacy education, with its critical examination of news, advertising, entertainment, issues of representation, and media ownership, has been challenged by two new approaches. One approach is focused on digital learning primarily in informal out-of-school or online contexts; another approach positions media literacy as a means to promote increased student motivation and engagement in school through the use of digital technologies or popular culture. The use of mobile media, social media and new technologies for teaching and learning is creating new opportunities for digital and media literacy education in the context of elementary and secondary education, but there are some concerns about what actual learning outcomes actually may result from the use of technology tools for transmission-based (not inquiry-based) learning.

A substantial body of case study literature has examined the practice of media literacy in the context of elementary and secondary education, and there has been an increase in the development of teacher education programs in media literacy. In 2011, UNESCO developed a global teacher education, the Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers, a resource designed to support member states in their continuing work towards achieving the objectives of the Grünwald Declaration (1982), the Alexandria Declaration (2005) and the UNESCO Paris Agenda (2007) – all related to media and information literacy. Acknowledging the convergence of radio, television, Internet, newspapers, books, digital archives and libraries into one platform, the curriculum is designed for integration into the formal teacher education system.

Cross-national studies of media literacy are rare, but there is a growing understanding that it is vital to examine the complex interplay between media systems, education systems, teacher motivation and cultural milieu of various nations as they advance media literacy education into formal education (Frau-Meigs and Torrent, 2007; Tornero and Varis 2010; Tilde, Grafe & Hobbs, 2015). As the means to create and disseminate media messages extend to masses of connected users, media literacy educators are now exploring how to help students participate in the mass and social media in addition to understanding and resisting its influence.

Media literacy educators use digital technology in cultivating student agency and voice in creating media. In Friesem's (2015) study of media production in an elementary school, he found that teachers were able to integrate creative media production activities into the existing curriculum. Hobbs and Moore (2013) demonstrated how media literacy instructional practices, because they capitalize on children's knowledge and familiarity with media culture, brings a spirit of "messy engagement" as students engage in authentic learning that connects classroom and culture. However, in some schools and communities, the routines of school culture may interfere with these goals. Ratale and Korhonen (2008) developed a digital media production practice for Grade 5 students in Finland. In the 32-hour workshop, children experiment with software that enables them to create role-plays, storyboards, movies and animations on screen using drag and drop commands. They select from a themed library of resources including characters, sounds, backgrounds, and props. While students demonstrated high levels of creativity, the project was time consuming. In many schools, digital media production
stands as a challenge to the traditional curriculum. Its novelty as an in-school activity can make it difficult to create organic connections between "school learning," "everyday
life" and digital media. Talk about mass media, entertainment and popular culture in the English language arts classroom can also be perceived suspiciously by students, as children ask, "What does this have to do with school?" The strong framing of knowledge by the traditional school curriculum contributes to a social reality where children accept the truth of school knowledge as being within the logical space of the school world rather than having any relevance to life outside the school.

With support from charitable foundations, a research and practice area often called digital media and learning developed as an offshoot of media literacy. Led by Mimi Ito, this group has developed an approach to education called "connected learning." This group of scholars advocates for broadened access to "learning that is socially embedded, interest-driven, and oriented toward educational, economic, or political

opportunit" (Ito et al, 2014, p. 1). A young person who is able to pursue a personal interest or passion with the support of friends and caring adults, and is in turn able to link this learning and interest to academic achievement, career success or civic engagement is demonstrating a form of connected learning. This kind of learning is conceptualized as resilient, adaptive, and effective because it is built on a foundation of the individual's person interests, where social support from others helps overcome adversity and provide recognition. Connected learning taps the opportunities provided by digital media to more easily link home, school, community and peer contexts of learning; support peer and intergenerational connections based on shared interests; and create more connections with non-dominant youth, drawing from capacities of diverse communities.

Media literacy educators have long sought to differentiate their work from that of educational technology, the use of media to engage learners, as a delivery system or a teaching aid. Critics fear that the rise of digital media and learning may run the risk of resurrecting "an old and well-established confusion between teaching about media and teaching through media" (Buckingham, 2009, p. 6). When media are used in these functional or instrumental ways, critical questions about media texts, tools and technologies tend to be marginalized or ignored.

Media literacy is also commonly recognized as a tool for strengthening young people's participation in civic and political life (Jenkins et al, 2007; Rheingold, 2008), enabling young people to seek out information on relevant issues, evaluate the quality of information available, and engage in dialogue with others to form coalitions (Bennett, 2008). One study found that nearly half of high school students from 21 high schools in California had engaged in various classroom activities designed to support media literacy competencies, including critically analyzing the trustworthiness of websites, using the Internet to get information about political or social issues, and creating content for the web. These activities are associated with higher rates of online politically driven participation (Kahne, Feezell & Lee, 2010). Over the next few years, it will be interesting to see how the productive tension between the protectionist and empowerment strands of the media literacy community evolve and change as a result of research and scholarship, practice in the field, changes in media and technology, and philanthropic and cultural funding priorities.

Policy Issues in Media Literacy

Governments have approached media literacy largely in relation to issues of deregulation, economic development and cultural preservation. As part of the Communications Act of 2003 OFCOM, the British broadcast regulator is building public awareness of media literacy to promote the interests of all citizens and to protect them from harm. When the agency was established, its focus was on media industry deregulation; it removed obstacles to cross-media ownership, and to global media companies operating in the UK market. As a policy, media literacy is essential in a deregulated, market-driven economy, where people need to be responsible for their own behavior as consumers (Buckingham, 2009). In this view, then, the media industry is a stakeholder in advancing the goals of media literacy. In the U.S., the media sector has long supported some forms of media literacy but not others. Companies including Time Warner, Google and other large companies now support Common Sense Media, a San Francisco based media literacy organization that caters to the needs of parents and educators. Private philanthropies associated with journalism have supported the growth

of news literacy by providing financial support to organizations including the News Literacy Project.

One policy issue that has been directly addressed by media literacy educators in the issue of media literacy, copyright and fair use. When media literacy educators experienced a generalized climate of fear, uncertainty and doubt about the legal use of copyrighted materials for teaching and learning, they worked collaboratively, with support from expert legal scholars, to develop a Code of Best Practices in Fair Use for Media Literacy Education. They continue to pressure the U.S. Copyright Office to extend fair use to include the ability to "rip" videos from DVDs for media literacy education in the context of higher education as well as elementary and secondary education (Hobbs, 2010; Hobbs, 2014).

Media literacy has largely remained a concern for media regulators, where in countries like Singapore or Turkey, the media regulator (MDA or RTUK) takes responsibility for curriculum development and teacher training in media literacy programs offered in the elementary and secondary schools. Frau-Meigs and Torrent (2009) catalogued the current state of the field in a 2009 book, *Mapping Media Education Policies*, which outlined progress made in countries including Austria, Brazil, Spain, South Korea, Finland, Argentina, Turkey and other nations. At the Education, Youth and Culture meeting held in Brussels in 2009, the Council of the European Union formally adopted a policy on a European approach to media literacy in the digital environment, "embedded in a package of measures to ensure an effective European single market for emerging audiovisual media services" (O'Neill, 2010, p. 328).

In some countries, media literacy policy is aimed to protect cultural heritage or the audiovisual economic sector. Bazalgette has noted the role of the British Film Institute in supporting media literacy as tied to the government's interest in supporting the British film industry (Bazalgette, 1997). In 2012, the British Film Institute, long an advocate for the use of critical inquiry in media literacy teacher education, advanced a new strategy, Film Forever is an ambitious five-year plan to "nurture business growth and cultural vibrancy" across the UK; it is designed to support a prosperous film business sector through cultivating audiences. Funded by a significantly increased lottery allocation and government grants, fundraising and new entrepreneurial activity, the Film Forever program relies on collaboration with the UK film industry as well as non-profit partners.

The European Commission has invested millions of euros in supporting European nations to develop the media and information literacy competencies of its citizens, reflecting an increasingly global awareness of the need to empower citizens by providing them with the competencies necessary to engage with traditional media and new technologies. Key elements include: understanding the role and functions of media in democratic societies; understanding the conditions under which media can fulfill their functions; critically evaluating media content; engaging with media for self-expression and democratic participation; and developing skills needed to produce user-generated content. Access to quality media and information content and participation in media and communication networks are necessary to realize Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights regarding the right to freedom of opinion and expression (UNESCO, 2013). Recognizing the increased competitive environment of the audiovisual sector that results from an inclusive knowledge society, the Council of Europe has noted that the

education system must better support people's ability to access, understand, evaluate, create and communicate media content as part of lifelong learning. They noted, "The responsible and informed use of new technologies and new media requires citizens to be aware of risks and to respect relevant legal provisions, but most literacy policies should address such questions in the context of a generally positive message" (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 2). The Council recommended the progressive development of criteria to assess the levels of media literacy in member states, beginning in 2011, a task that has been initiated by a number of federal agencies with support from key European scholars.

Some scholars question, however, the extent to which European media literacy education will balance the 'consumer' orientation (promoting the use of media) with the 'citizenship' orientation (empowering critical analysis and active participation), especially given the recalcitrance of the formal education sector in many European nations (O'Neill, 2010).

The UN-Alliance of Civilizations Media Literacy Education Clearinghouse is a global repository, focusing on media literacy education, media education policy, and youth media. Nordicom and UNESCO have also established a clearinghouse to collect research on youth and media with the goal of broadening knowledge and increasing awareness about media literacy. Policy work continues to raise awareness and to mobilize all stakeholders involved, including high-level political decision makers for maximum impact. They collaborate with other international and national organizations on launching initiatives, such as public awareness campaigns on media literacy, helping to organize national and international meetings with key decision makers.

In the United States, with its decentralized education system, support for digital and media literacy education exists in some of the more than 15,000 local school districts. Although nearly all states include media literacy learning outcomes in their state education standards, each of the school districts must decide whether and how media literacy education is implemented. In general, such work happens as a result of initiative taken by individual enthusiast teachers or school leaders (Hobbs, 2011a). University faculty may advance media literacy in K-12 education by using school-university partnership models, which bring undergraduate and graduate students into schools to support the integration of media literacy into the curriculum (Scharrer, 2006; Hobbs and Moore, 2013).

However, media policymakers have explicitly addressed the need for media literacy for the wider population, not just children and youth. For example, the FCC's "Future of Media" initiative sought public comment on this question: "What kinds of digital and media literacy programs are appropriate to help people both use new information and communication technologies effectively and to analyze and evaluate the news and information they are receiving?" (Barnett, 2010). The Knight Commission's influential report, "Informing Communities: Sustaining Democracy in a Digital Age" identifies media literacy in relation to enhancing the information capacity of individuals, particularly in relation to citizenship (Knight Commission, 2009). And it is impossible to overstate the influence of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, which since 2007 has invested more than $80 million in research on digital media and learning, in supporting a variety of diverse research and practical projects that are transforming the field.

The Future of Digital & Media Literacy

When the U.S. Educational Testing Service, the company that administers the high-stakes SAT test required for admission to American colleges (Steinberg, 2011) used a question inviting students to critically analyze the genre of reality TV, it asked students to write essay in response to the prompt: "Reality television programs, which feature real people engaged in real activities rather than professional actors performing scripted scenes, are increasingly popular. These shows depict ordinary people competing in everything from singing and dancing to losing weight, or just living their everyday lives. Most people believe that the reality these shows portray is authentic, but they are being misled. How authentic can these shows be when producers design challenges for the participants and then editors alter filmed scenes? Do people benefit from forms of entertainment that show so-called reality, or are such forms of entertainment harmful?" (Bunin, 2011).

While media literacy educators cheered at the news, educators who prioritize the need to transmit core knowledge and emphasize that knowledge is foundational to the development of literacy competencies (Hirsch, 2011) were less than satisfied. Some educational leaders object to digital and media literacy's emphasis on activating and extending students' prior knowledge from their experience with mass media and popular culture. This controversy continues to limit the application of digital and media literacy in elementary and secondary educational institutions around the world (Cappello, Felini, Hobbs, 2011).

However, scholars have begun to develop strategies for evaluating media and technology resources in search of those that "support, conceptualize and extend" student learning without simply adding "glitz and glamor in an electronic learning environment" (Coiro, Karchmer-Klein & Walpole, 2006, p. 154). In one project, researchers developed a three-year longitudinal study to examine a learning environment intentionally designed to provide urban youth with tools and learning opportunities that would allow them to create, collaborate and communicate with new media production technologies. The program offered a series of after-school clubs in graphic design, digital broadcasting, movie making, music recording and remixing, and video game development. Results show that, with effective mentoring, students are able to shift their sense of identity to position themselves as authors (Barron et al, 2010). Scholarly inquiry on the practices that contribute to youth empowerment are a vital part of research in digital and media literacy education.

While governments may define digital and media literacy quite narrowly as the technical skills associated with using the Internet to search for jobs and access social services, educators conceptualize it as the knowledge and skills needed to use social media, including creative and collaborative skills or the sense of social responsibility associated with responsible online use. In the future, it will be important to align the work of practitioners, policymakers and scholars about the conceptualization of digital literacy in relation to mass media, social media and popular culture.

Historiography of Media Literacy

The origins of the concept of media literacy are just beginning to be studied by researchers and scholars. In the United States, film viewers recognized the educational potential of the new medium within the first years of exposure. The first local cinema club devoted to the study of film was the Cleveland Cinema Club, founded in 1915. Between 1915 and 1934, across the United States and parts of Europe, educators and parents were engaged in film discussions that brought a critical approach to film, redefining notions of spectatorship. In the U.S., members of the industry were drawn "into complicated and unfamiliar debates about the relationship between film production and film reception" (Nichols, 2013, p. 6).

During this time, the concept of active film viewing also became a part of the serious study of film in the context of university and higher education, and as Polan (2007) has observed, there were three distinct threads to teaching about film that focused on context, aesthetics and genre. In Europe, children's cinema clubs existed in countries across the United Kingdom, France and Italy. Fedorov and Friesem (2015) describe the historical origins of youth cinema clubs in Russia, noting that the form and structure of these clubs served as a precursor to contemporary media literacy education programs.

During the 1930s, the rise of Hollywood film and commercial radio generated a significant level of interest around the world in understanding how new tools of expression and communication affected children and youth. In the United States, the Payne Fund studies represented a first attempt to investigate the media's influence in public life using principles of social science to measure film's impact on knowledge, behavior and socialization. Some of the Payne studies explored the frequency of movie viewing as well as the influence of films on children's sleep habits and their attitudes towards racial and ethnic groups (DeFleur, 2010). Some studies showed that children and adults acquire considerable general information about English, history and geography from movie viewing. It was hypothesized that movies could revolutionize the means by which traditional academic subjects could be taught in the classroom, especially for those who were not academically gifted.

In 1933, as the culminating volume in the Payne Fund Studies, Edgar Dale published *How to Appreciate Motion Pictures*, a book intended for high school students that stood in distinct contrast to the dominant discourse of the other Payne Fund studies, which in general characterized children and young people as being seduced by the overwhelming visual spectacle of films to adopt questionable moral values. Dale wrote about the practice of *film appreciation*, which even as early as 1933 had some advocates, including high school teachers, social workers, youth advocates, parents and clergy. They believed that film viewers could analyze cinematography, study the narrative representations of race and wealth, assess historical accuracy, and relate a character's behavior to their own personal lives. Such methods of viewing were thought to produce discriminating viewers who would serve as new types of consumers, enticing Hollywood to create quality films. Advocates of film appreciation thought they "could produce a new generation of filmmakers, amateur as well as professional, who might reform Hollywood either by working within the film industry or by competing with Hollywood in alternative venues devoted to educational and documentary filmmaking" (Nichols, 2006, p. 6). Unfortunately, the film appreciation movement included too many people who know little about the cinema and are inspired largely by a desire to protect their children,"

according to Dale, who spoke at a National Council of Teachers of English Conference in 1936 (Nichols, 2006, p. 12).

When examining the history of media literacy, it is obvious that issues of media reform and media advocacy have long been conflated with media literacy. All across the U.S., "Better Broadcast" groups were formed in the 1930s, often co-sponsored by organizations including the American Association of University Women. By the 1950s, with the advent of television, in the United States, these groups came together on a national level to form the American Council for Better Broadcasts, with representatives from 18 national organizations, 18 state groups, and delegates from 93 cities in 34 states. Their mission was to stimulate the broadcasting of good radio and television programs; "to study, in order to arrive a standards for judging programs;" and to encourage stations in fulfilling their obligations to serve the "public interest, convenience and necessity." The monthly newsletters of this organization morphed into the *Telemedium*, a publication of the National Telemedia Council, which eventually was retitled, *Journal of Media Literacy*.

In England, government support for media education provided an important source of funding and visibility that was not available to American educators. For example, the British Film Institute actively supported a discourse community of educators through disseminating publications, journals, curriculum resources, and conferences, as Bolas(2009) has chronicled in his history of the rise of screen education in England. By the 1950s, the British Society for Education in Film and Television published *The Film Teacher*, edited by Derek J. Davies, which aimed to explore how to immunize children from negative media influence and help children practice discrimination in evaluating film quality. Other journals promoting audiovisual education also proliferated, and the British Film Institute controlled instructional strategies for teaching film through its dissemination of film extracts which were made available to teachers (Bolas, 2014). The topic of media violence also attracted substantial attention as British educators were concerned about films "in which vicious behavior is disguised, presented in a form in which audiences can enjoy it with a clear conscience" (Mackendrick, as quoted in Bolas, 2009, p. 74).

British students could take a Film Appreciation class in some schools, but they did so as an additional subject superimposed upon an already full schedule and with no academic credit to be acknowledged. By the mid-1950s, the book *Teaching Film* by Grace Greiner, identified five approaches to teaching film to high school students through discussion, including moral, sociological, critical, technical and historical approaches. During this time, it was relatively rare to engage children and young people in film production, but one article, published in *Film Teacher* in 1955, describes an experiment where children learn that creating a film involves a lot of planning, collaboration and hard work, reflecting the value of process over product (Bolas, 2009).

Often considered the grandfather of the media literacy movement, Marshall McLuhan created a media literacy syllabus for high school students under the rubric of a new approach to language and literature (Marchand, 1989), emphasizing the practice of interpretation not through an expert transmission model, but through student-centered practices of probing, deconstruction and close reading, using the media of communication as the text of study. Terms like genre, language, audience, message, medium, meaning, form, content, and context are central in this approach to critical

analysis. McLuhan's emergence in the 1960s offered educators fresh perspectives on educating the television generation by teaching *about* media. In his view, societies have always been shaped more by the nature of the media with which individuals communicate than by the apparent content of the communication. His phrase, "the medium is the message" came to embody the historic view that the means by which human beings communicate have always structured their actions. He also introduced the idea that the mass media were turning the world into a "global village," shrinking the world with respect to shared experience.

At the same time, there was rising interest in educational technology, with its focus on comparing the value of teaching *with* media in relation to traditional face-to-face learning contexts. Researchers had demonstrated that learning from a mass medium could occur in different ways among different audiences, despite the uniform nature of the message (Seels, Barry, Fullerton & Horn, 1996). Until about 1965, these studies tended to be exclusively experimental in nature, conducted in non-naturalistic laboratory settings. But when Joan Ganz Cooney talked with preschool educators about the question of whether young children could benefit from educational television, she wanted to get into communities to see how television was being used in real households. She formed the Children's Television Workshop with financial support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, which premiered *Sesame Street* in 1968. The show's premise was designed to target low-income preschool children with compelling visual content that was entertaining and educational (Lesser 1974). More than 1,000 research studies have shown the effectiveness of Sesame Street in educating children on a variety of skills and issues (Wong, 2015). The rising interest in educational television also offered support for media literacy, as Neil Postman offered a Sunrise Semester educational television program on CBS Television in 1976 entitled, "Communication: The Invisible Environment" about the impact of mediated communication technologies on contemporary life.

By the mid-1970s, there was a growing discourse about television's impact on children and youth and increasing public awareness that media literacy could support media reform initiatives, educational innovation and support for parents and caregivers. Elizabeth Thoman created *Media&Values* as a magazine for the Center for Media and Values, which became the Center for Media Literacy from 1977 to 1993. As the most influential non-profit organization promoting media literacy in the U.S. in the 1980s and 1990s, it is possible to see the evolution of media literacy concepts and practices, as well as the conversations between discourses from media studies, education, and the public sphere that have produced the field of media literacy education *Media&Values* reflected the shifts in media literacy education from a mostly protectionist paradigm concerned with helping individuals mitigate negative media effects, to include early manifestations of an empowerment paradigm seeking to help people use media for their benefit (Robb Grieco, 2015).

During the 1970s, schools in the United Kingdom were actively involved in teaching about media and in 1980, Len Masterman wrote *Teaching About Television*, which offered a comprehensive philosophy and overview of pedagogical methods representing best practices among educators. There was distinct tension evident between educators who focused on analysis of media and those who engaged students in creating media. In some U.S. communities, school-based programs in media production eventually were cut due to budget shortfalls and, as a result, afterschool and summer

youth media programs emerged to provide children with film production learning experiences. A study of narrative feature-length films created by children ages 9 -17 from a private archive of youth media work collected by the founder of Cinekyd, a for-profit youth media project developed in Philadelphia by Robert J. Clark, Jr., offers insights on the relationship between children and their adult mentors and between youth media authors and their presumed and real audiences (Hobbs & Moore, 2014). Still, the completed films provide only scant and indirect evidence of the production and learning process that children experienced.

By the 1980s, schools were actively experimenting with media literacy in In Canada and the United States. In 1987, Ontario was the first Canadian province to mandate media education, publishing *Media Literacy*, a resource guide for middle-school and high school learners. By the mid-2000s, many states and provinces in North America included a media literacy strand in English language arts education, which gave media literacy equal status as traditional areas of emphasis including oral communication, vocabulary, reading, and writing.

The practice of media literacy education shifted greatly during the second decade of the 21st century as a result of increased access to digital media and technology in schools all over the world. A stronger focus on the integration of media literacy with digital technology is especially noteworthy. For example, in Turkey, a media literacy elective course was developed for middle-school students in 2007. By 2015, more than 350,000 children each year enroll in the course. In the United States, educators in the K-12 grades began using practices of *digital storytelling*, enabling students to create media using images, language, sound and interactivity.

Yet, in Europe, where media literacy education had made such strides, there was a backlash of sorts. While the European Union had supported a wide diversity of small projects that enabled considerable expansion in media literacy policy from 2006 – 2010, a shift in policy re-focused on the challenges of locating media education in particular formal, semi-formal and informal educational settings. A range of obstacles still face those wishing to implement media literacy initiatives, including a lack of communication channels to share opportunities and best practices. Measuring media literacy has proved contentious, especially as regards the development of comparable, standardized indices.

Primary Sources

Historical perspective on media literacy education in the United States is available at the Elizabeth Thoman Center for Media Literacy Archives, held by the Media Education Lab at the University of Rhode Island. The Center for Media Literacy is a Los Angeles-based non-profit organization that published a wide variety of curriculum materials and resources to support the advancement of media literacy education in elementary and secondary schools. A collection of resources about the history of supporting educators' use of film and television is located in the KIDSNET collection at the Temple University Libraries. It is a resource for the study of media and children, shifts in popular culture and attitudes, and the history of late 20th century communications. KIDSNET began as a project of the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education as the Clearinghouse of Information on Children's Radio and Television. The KIDSNET database categorizes and describes over 20,000 programs. KIDSNET also produced influential syndicated columns, newsletters, bulletins, and

educator's study guides. The National Telemedia Council, a non-profit media literacy organization located in Madison Wisconsin, also maintains a private archive of resources on media literacy from the 1930s to today.

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