



A Field Guide to Media Literacy Education in the United States

By

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Introduction

Media literacy educators and scholars are a diverse community held together by a common interest in helping people access, analyze, evaluate and create media in order to enable healthier, safer, more ethical, more effective, and more powerful participation in our media and technology saturated society. The people who design, teach, study, and engage in media literacy education do so in a variety of settings with a variety of stakeholders. Thus, reaching out from its common core principles, the media literacy education (MLE) community has many strands, each emphasizing (and sometimes neglecting) certain aspects of media literacy, and privileging certain educational goals over others. To successfully engage media literacy communities for outreach and partnership, it is important to understand the nuances of each strand within the community, and to recognize potential points of mutual interest and discord.

Each strand, setting, practitioner, stakeholder and funder of MLE cares about media literacy because of its relevance to contemporary society. For learners, relevance is the key to engagement and motivation. For parents, teachers, employers, and policy makers, MLE is attractive for its relevance to skills necessary for citizenship, jobs, and cultural participation in a mediated world. In some ways, the history of media literacy education has shifted to be relevant to one dominant media after another (from print and radio to film and television to Internet and mobile media), and to be relevant to shifts in ideas of citizenship and pedagogy. This shifting history of relevance is what MLE has to offer potential partners in outreach.

The following report maps what's what and who's who in the field of media literacy education today, and where, how, and why the prominent players in the field practice media literacy in various ways that may present opportunities or complications for outreach and for potential partnerships with the MLE community. With this field guide, organizations, scholars, and educators will be equipped to navigate the diverse terrain and to speak the various dialects of media literacy in order to recognize possibilities for strategic partnerships to extend educational outreach to this vast audience of educators, scholars, and learners. The report features three main sections: (A) the "big tent" of the media literacy community (including an overview of core principles, pedagogy, learning theories, and best/worst practices), (B) the two paradigms of "protection" and "empowerment" that underpin approaches to media literacy practice, and (C) each of the strands of media literacy that are prominent in various educational settings and institutions today. With the discussions of each strand, particular organizations and individuals of interest are identified as operating in that area of the media literacy community on the national and international scale. In addition to describing key players in each media literacy strand and identifying potential points of synergy and conflict for prospective partners, the report features three appendices, which go into detail about settings of MLE practice and list relevant individuals and organizations.

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Appendix 1: Settings of Practice, MLE Strands in Context

Media literacy education is a fast-moving target. As both a field and a movement, it is dynamic and evolving continually. We first began work on this paper in July 2012 to support the needs of a client interested in developing an outreach campaign with the media literacy community. The authors gratefully acknowledge JoAnna Wasserman for her leadership and guidance in helping conceptualizing this report.

The “Big Tent”: The Broad View of the MLE Community

Under the “big tent,” media literacy can be seen as an expanded form of literacy that is well-integrated with media studies, education and cultural studies. Media literacy entails reading and writing, as “consuming and producing” or “using and creating,” in a variety of media forms to enable civic, economic, and cultural participation. Media literacy involves critical thinking about the messages we receive and create in new and old media of all forms (print, audio, visual, digital, mobile, etc.), genres (movies, TV shows, music, websites, social media, etc.), purposes (news, entertainment, advertising, political, etc.), and social values (popular, critically acclaimed, canonical, controversial, etc.).

This expanded view of literacy is integrated with media studies and cultural studies approaches towards understanding the power, techniques, contexts and effects of media industries, texts, audiences, and users. It is well-aligned with approaches to education reform that address issues of technology access and literacy competencies as well as learner engagement and motivation. It draws strength from strands of non-profit advocacy and social change movements that emphasize the need for people to be active citizens and participants in the democratic process. A well informed, active citizenship through media literacy practice has been a foundational goal of MLE throughout its history, but different strands of practice operationalize the scope of citizenship that they address in different ways. For some, citizenship involves healthy skepticism about information, while for others it requires active reform efforts or participation in digital cultures. The broad view of MLE supports learners as citizens to access, analyze and act through their media use, and to grow in their civic engagement from spectators and skeptics to explorers and activists.

Under the big tent, MLE is concerned with broad issues of media *access*. Best practices in MLE offer learners opportunities to gain access to:

- diverse sources of information, entertainment and cultural enrichment;
- diverse media texts for a wide range of purposes;
- efficient and safe means to seek, sort and store information;
- tools and skills for finding, creating, communicating, and using media texts;
- tools and skills for collaborating, sharing, teaching and learning with media;
- diverse audiences to receive learners’ own media messages; and
- communities of interest that support cultural participation and lifelong learning.

However, MLE is not merely using media and technology for educational purposes or cultural participation. Access (to media tools, texts, sources, skills, collaborators, audiences, and communities) is just the beginning.

Media literacy education promotes habits of inquiry and skills of expression for effective communication, active citizenship, and healthy, ethical media use. Best practices in MLE employ constructivist pedagogy to position learners as active in co-constructing meanings through inquiry, analysis, discussion and reflective practice rather than passively

receiving knowledge from authoritative media texts, regurgitating preferred meanings, or imitating pre-scripted creative decisions. The most effective educators do not transmit knowledge and train expertise, but instead facilitate inquiry and discussion, scaffold growth around learners' existing skills and interests, and support shared expertise through reflective practice and authentic experiences. The learning theories of John Dewey (co-constructing meaning from experience), Lev Vygotsky (social learning and scaffolding new expertise from students' prior skills and interests), and Paolo Freire (reflective practice and agency) are foundational for best practices in MLE. Educators recognize that all media texts are polysemic (having many possible meanings) and that each of the media has its own language (sign system, or semiotics). Some facility with the vocabulary and grammar of particular media languages is important. However, the broad view of MLE has common core principles of inquiry that apply to all media messages that we receive and create.

Educators focus on core concepts and key questions, which retain their value when transferred to various media and communication contexts. When they engage with any sort of media, as users and as makers, learners are encouraged to reflect upon these types of questions:

Authors and Audiences:

- Who made the media message, with what resources, and for what purpose?
- Who are the target audiences or communication participants?
- How might different people understand the messages differently?

Messages and Meanings:

- What are the messages and what techniques are used to construct meanings?
- How does the media text attract and sustain attention and participation?
- What is omitted from the message with what consequences?

Representations and Reality:

- What are the historical, social and cultural contexts for the messages?
- How does the media text reflect, reinforce, shape, or distort reality?
- What values, lifestyles and points of view are embedded in the message?
- Who benefits, who is harmed, and who is not represented?

Although MLE adjusts and adapts these concepts and questions for learners of different ages, experiences, and abilities, best practices encourage habits of mind that actively engage these core principles in all encounters with media.

In addition to habits of inquiry, critical thinking, and skillful media practice around core concepts and key questions, best practices in MLE promote taking action in response to media messages and to express learners' own ideas in media. Again, best practices

support learners in using media to express their own ideas while reflecting upon questions of audience, meaning, representation, reality and ethics, rather than prescribing values for messages and correct methods of expression. Action can involve simulation where learners are free to play with new tools and concepts, in simulated roles of media makers or media industry executives, in the safety of the learning community. But action in MLE also involves authentic audiences or communities of media practice where the participation and media made by learners can have real effects, such as local performances, publications, forums, commentary on blogs and nings, or PSAs broadcast on public radio or public access TV.

Under the big tent, media literacy practice is not relegated to stand alone courses in media studies, or workshops and assemblies on media literacy. MLE advocates encourage the approaches to media literacy outlined above as an integral part of diverse educational settings, formal and informal, across multiple disciplines, for people of all ages (for details on where MLE is practiced in particular, see Appendix 3, *Settings of Practice*). From the broad view perspective, the diversity of MLE approaches and settings is a great strength of the big tent, as advocates favor balanced approaches to practice across wide ranges of media texts, contexts, and purposes. However, under the big tent, there are many strands of practice that emphasize certain core concepts, types of media, kinds of access, and purposes for MLE over others. These strands gravitate towards two poles that hold up the big tent and distinguish MLE approaches: the protectionist and the empowerment paradigms.

Media Literacy, Broad View: Key Organizations

The **National Association for Media Literacy Education** (NAMLE) is a national membership organization whose mission is to improve and expand the practice of media literacy education in the United States. They aim to help individuals of all ages develop the habits of inquiry and skills of expression that they need to be critical thinkers, effective communicators and active citizens in today's world. They publish an online peer-reviewed journal, the *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, and bring together a broad-based coalition of practitioners, educators, scholars, students, health care professionals, K-12 teachers, community activists and media business professionals from diverse fields, professions, and perspectives. Sherri Hope Culver, a professor at Temple University, is the president of the organization.

Under the Big Tent: Paradigms and Strands of MLE

Using the big tent metaphor, protectionism and empowerment paradigms are two poles supporting the community structures around which the various strands of MLE gather to practice and perform. As the terms suggest, protectionist approaches offer MLE as a defense against big bad media influences, and empowerment approaches practice MLE as a means to personal, social, economic and cultural efficacy in a media-rich society.

Although distinctions between the two paradigms can be contentious among advocates of each side, it is clear that the approaches are not mutually exclusive.



Protectionist Paradigm. The protectionist paradigm in MLE has a rich history reaching back to the beginnings of the media literacy concept. In the 1930s and 40s, a new generation of writers, activists and scholars in literary analysis, linguistics and education began to recognize the power of language to shape reality. Alfred Korzybski's *Science and Sanity*, first published in 1933, presented a non-Aristotelian philosophy that emphasized the need for heightened awareness of the power of symbols on human consciousness and social action. During WWII, when the field of communication studies was in its infancy, the study of propaganda emerged with the Institute for Propaganda Analysis in 1937. Members of this group developed the now-famous seven techniques of propaganda: name-calling, glittering generalities, transfer, testimonial, plain-folks, card-stacking, and bandwagon. Clyde Miller, a journalist/author received funding from department store magnate Edward Filene to promote curriculum materials for the identification of propaganda techniques, and it is estimated that over one million students used these materials within the first three years of its creation. As the popularity of these concepts grew, the Institute of Propaganda Analysis acknowledged that simple detection of propaganda was not enough in the struggle to maintain democracy in an era of mass persuasion. Americans continually need to evaluate whether a particular form of propaganda is directed to a socially useful end or a socially damaging one.

By the 1950s, the rise of television in American culture led to concern among parents, teachers and citizens about its influence on children and youth. Politicians and thought leaders had conflicting views about this new form of entertainment that was changing family leisure time, consumption of goods and services, and politics. The first Congressional hearing on media violence, in 1952, began to raise awareness of, and take action against, harmful influences in media messages, negative consequences of media use, consolidated control over media and information, and limited, stereotypical, and misleading representations in various media. Over the past sixty years, concern about media's influence on social values and behavior has shaped the tenor of American cultural life.

Protectionists recognize that big media often operate outside of people's interests for profit and for political motives that do not consider costs to public health, equity, or power. Media literacy is sometimes seen as an inoculation against negative media influences and as a means to resist and challenge media power. MLE is both praised and critiqued as an alternative to media regulation or censorship. The protectionist paradigm is particularly concerned with MLE for, and on behalf of, audiences and users who are seen as vulnerable, such as children, adolescents, elderly people, and the disabled, or as historically disadvantaged, such as women, LGBTQ sexualities, minority ethnicities and religious groups. However, MLE can also be offered as a protection for conservative majority groups against threats to mainstream sensibilities and "common sense" from "liberal media bias" or "fringe" interests. Although practitioners of the protectionist

paradigm sometimes split along such political lines, protectionism also makes universal claims for promoting MLE for all people as a way to address public health issues and abuses of media power. Learners are seen as vulnerable, in need of awareness, knowledge, skills, discipline, enrichment and refinement of their media use in order to be healthy and make positive change in society. Detractors see protectionist approaches as paternalism, working from a deficit model of learning. Advocates view protectionism as a realistic way to address social and health issues that learners and their caregivers face in media saturated society. Prominent strands of the protectionist paradigm include *media and public health, digital ethics and online safety, media reform, and critical media literacy*.



Empowerment Paradigm. The empowerment paradigm of MLE has roots in the humanities for personal enrichment and in the power of media to serve public interests. Undoubtedly, John Dewey's influence is at the heart of this paradigm, with his insistence that education is fundamental to the development of civil society. Dewey believed that effective, process-oriented communication (including both personal relationships and institutions of mass media) could help produce significant improvements in the development of new knowledge to improve the quality of life for people in the United States and around the world. Progressive educators emphasized children as active (not passive) learners and promoted the rise of vocational education as a means to connect school and society.

During the 1960s and 1970s, interest in empowerment as a theme for the reform of American education re-emerged. Scholars including Paolo Freire, author of *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and Neil Postman, author of *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*, emphasized the need for young people to critically analyze media, culture and society, using insights from this practice to fully participate in democratic action and self-governance. In the 1980s, MIT's Seymour Papert developed an argument that emphasized the relationship between making and learning. Only by making things, he argued, do children learn best. By learning fundamentals of computer programming and engineering, children not only learn career skills; they develop problem-solving skills that transfer to support the ordinary competencies required for daily living.

During the 1990s, the rise of desktop computing tools and other innovations in digital technologies shifted the balance of power in the information economy. Among those with interests in educational technology, the empowerment paradigm of MLE has grown with the notion that all people can use media to create, promote and spread their own interests, and that such participation is essential for healthy democracies. Empowerment approaches seek to develop learners' voices through media, to help learners understand and manipulate media languages, to ensure all citizens access to media resources and technologies, and to support learners connections to communities of interest in which to gain new skills, knowledge, collaborators, and audiences for their own contributions through media they create and spread. From the empowerment perspective, learners have valuable media experience, interests, meaning-making skills, and expertise that can be cultivated and enhanced through the reflective practice and scaffolded support of MLE.

Media industries offer opportunities for learning, models for practice, and participation, as well as challenges for learners who want to further shift balances of power, transform the system, and make social and institutional change. Empowerment approaches celebrate the power of individuals to contribute their voices and choices through their media use and creation. The empowerment paradigm conceptualizes imbalances in power via media control as participation gaps, ignorance of media influence as transparency problems, and dangerous aspects of media use as ethics challenges, each of which can be addressed through MLE.

Some empowerment approaches focus on learners expressing their voices on local issues, while others promote learners' contributions to the wider marketplace of ideas through their choices as news consumers, newsmakers, and active citizens who understand their responsibility to seek, spread, and create quality information. While empowerment approaches honor the pleasures that learners take in various popular media, advocates also promote reflective practice and critical discussion of ethical issues in media use and representations. Detractors see empowerment approaches as naïve about the susceptibility of young learners to the seductions of unhealthy media use, the vulnerability of historically disadvantaged groups, and the persistence of status quo ideologies with massive inequities in media power. Critics see the empowerment paradigm as overly concerned with engagement and immersion at the expense of critical distance and transformative action; they see empowerment approaches as deeming that "the kids are alright" amidst too much evidence that "the kids are not alright." Advocates view immersion in media use and engagement with media texts as a virtue, a fluency, which is not seen as passive. However, MLE can support more active and critical engagement in meaning making from texts. Adding reflective practice to participation in media can improve efficacy of communication and ensure ethical action, maximizing benefits and limiting harm in the user's interests. Advocates see learner-centered approaches building on existing and shared expertise with reflective practice as the best approach to improve economic and cultural participation through MLE. Prominent strands of empowerment paradigm include *broadband adoption, digital literacy, digital media and learning, news literacy, information literacy, youth media, and visual literacy*.

Prominent Strands in the Protectionist Paradigm

This section details the ideas and practices of educators in each of the four strands of the protectionist paradigm along with profiles of key players for potential partnerships. A similar section on the seven strands of the empowerment paradigm follows this section.

Media and Public Health



This MLE strand focuses on helping learners to mitigate unhealthy influences and adverse effects of media messages and representations, and to develop healthy habits of media use. Practitioners emphasize questions including:

- Who benefits and who is harmed by this media message or use?
- How does the representation relate to reality?
- What lifestyles are embedded in a media message or the way we use media?

Critical analysis focuses on the techniques used to attract attention and influence audiences, including propaganda techniques. Topics include body image, self esteem, obesity and overeating, smoking, drugs and alcohol, violence, sex, and risk behavior as represented in advertising and entertainment media as well as media use issues such as balanced media diet, attention deficit, multitasking, and screen time. Curricula tend to target children, adolescents, and parents, as well as teachers. Activities include research on representations of risk behaviors, critical analysis and discussion of unhealthy or risky media messages, self monitoring of media use through media diaries, and media production of counterpropaganda and health issue PSA's. This pedagogy is underpinned by research in media effects and theories of media cultivation, developmental psychology, and social cognition. Approaches are criticized for treating learners as vulnerable, powerless and deficient while broadly demonizing entertainment media (especially video games) and disturbing learners' pleasures in, and identifications with, media texts. Worst practices include decontextualized and a-historic readings of media texts, delivery of preferred readings of media texts rather than critical co-construction of meaning with learners, and prescription of healthy media use without critical inquiry or discussion. Best practices balance recognition of vulnerability at different developmental stages with inquiry, critical discussion and pro-social action. Such approaches are lauded for serving parents' interests and addressing real media-related issues in students' lives.

Media and Public Health: Key Organizations

The **American Academy of Pediatrics** has long been an advocate of MLE, updating its 1999 policy paper on Media Education most recently in 2010. They recognize that exposure to mass media (e.g., television, movies, video and computer games, the Internet, music lyrics and videos, newspapers, magazines, books, advertising) presents health risks for children and adolescents but can provide benefits as well. Media education has the potential to reduce the harmful effects of media and accentuate the positive effects. By understanding and supporting media education, pediatricians can play an important role

in reducing harmful effects of media on children and adolescents. Contact: Margorie Hogan, MD. Staff: Veronica Laude Noland

Girl Scouts of the USA, along with the National Association of Broadcasters, the National Cable and Telecommunications Association, and the **Creative Coalition**, have collaborated on an initiative called, “Watch What You Watch,” a series of PSAs and advocacy resources designed to elevate awareness of the importance of health media images about girls and women. Key contacts: Robin Bronk, Creative Coalition.

The **Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media** works within the media and entertainment industry to engage, educate, and influence the need for gender balance, reducing stereotyping and creating a wide variety of female characters for entertainment targeting children 11 and under. In 2011, Geena Davis worked with Senator Kay Hagan (D-NC) and Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin (D- WI) to introduce a bill that would support efforts to improve the image of girls and women in the media. Key contact: Madeleine DiNonno.

Media Reform



This strand helps learners understand the structures and influence of powerful media institutions, take action against their control of cultural resources, seek out diverse information and entertainment, and create independent media for public and community interests. Practitioners emphasize questions including:

- Who made the message, with what resources, and for what purpose?
- What lifestyles, values and points of view are embedded in the message?
- Who benefits, who is harmed, and who is not represented?

MLE for media reform involves analysis of the political economy of media production, and critical views of media ownership with private business and political interests masquerading as public services (particularly news corporations, political communication, and advertising). Learners are positioned as vulnerable to agenda setting, persuasion, omissions and distortions by big media. MLE practice helps to demystify the economic and political interests that drive the culture industries of news, entertainment, advertising, and public relations. MLE also helps learners evaluate messages and sources, and access quality information to make informed decisions as citizens and consumers. Media reform pedagogy teaches learners to distinguish quality information from propaganda and euphemisms used by politicians to sell war or by advertisers to dupe consumers. Approaches sometimes compare historical examples of propaganda to current political communication. Some practitioners work towards sensitizing learners to subtler forms of propaganda in media such as military-themed video games and corporate-sponsored environments. On the media production side, media reform encourages learners to make news and media messages that help inform citizens about under-represented social issues. Media reform approaches often connect learners to local resources for public media production and dissemination. Best practices include exposure

to diverse media sources and resources along with student centered critical analysis and discussion of relationships between media messages and media institutions balanced with opportunities to take action. Action through MLE for media reform encourages learners to speak out as concerned consumers and as independent media producers to make the media power structure transparent for other citizens and to counter messages and practices that learners find objectionable with their own independently produced media messages. Worst practices involve teacher-led political action, corporate media bashing, and inculcation to particular ideologies of resistance. Critics contend that MLE for media reform often privileges teachers' expertise and values, as well as transmission models of learning about political economy of media. Advocates believe that media reform approaches offer protection and liberation from dominant media by introducing alternatives that might never have occurred to learners as possibilities. Media reform approaches to MLE take place mostly in formal classroom settings in secondary and higher education media studies courses, in extra curricular clubs led by media reform activists, and in outreach courses at community media centers. This strand of MLE is often intertwined with the broader strand of critical media literacy.

Media Reform: Key Organizations

Free Press is a national, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization working to reform the media. They host the National Conference for Media Reform, which will be held April 5 – 7, 2013 in Denver. Through education, organizing and advocacy, they promote diverse and independent media ownership, strong public media, quality journalism and universal access to communications. The organization provides a number of information resources and tools that support media literacy education by building people's knowledge of media industry ownership, structure, economics and regulation and developing skills in community mobilization and activism. Key contact: Josh Silver.

The **Media and Democracy Coalition** is a collaboration of over two dozen local and national organizations committed to promoting open and equal access to a democratic media system that serves the public interest. Contact: Wally Bowen (Mountain Area Information Network) and Jeff Chester (Center for a Digital Democracy) have long been active in supporting the media literacy movement.

Public Knowledge is a non-profit policy organization whose mission is to preserve the openness of the Internet and the public's access to knowledge. They promote creativity through balanced copyright, and uphold and protect the rights of consumers to use innovative technology lawfully. Contact: Gigi Sohn is the Executive Director. She was formerly at the Ford Foundation's Media Arts and Culture unit and Executive Director of the Media Access Project.

The **Benton Foundation** is a non-profit research and advocacy organization whose mission is premised on the belief that our democracy is enhanced by a rich and inclusive media system that values the voices of all communities. They support research that

indicates the health and well-being of public service media. Key contacts: Charles Benton, Cecilia Garcia.

Digital Ethics & Online Safety



This strand focuses on helping learners practice safe and ethical behavior in digital media. Practitioners emphasize questions including:

- Who makes, owns and participates in online media for what purposes?
- How do different people understand media messages differently?
- Who is harmed and who benefits?
- How credible and reliable is this source or site?
- How do representations relate to reality?

These questions are applied to learners' experiences with online and mobile digital media, including social networking sites, file sharing, online shopping, crowd-sourced information resources, video and image posting, website commentary, texting, picture messaging, email, and instant messaging. Activities involve simulations, online games, and reflective practice with digital and mobile media, and promote healthy skepticism about information, web sites, and online personalities while posing ethical questions about implications of one's own media messages. Topics include safety issues in digital environments, such as cyberbullying, harassment, peer pressure, privacy, predators, and risk behaviors; ethical and legal issues around copyright, piracy, intellectual property, plagiarism, fraud and identity theft; and issues combining ethics and safety in digital media such as hate speech, religious persecution, racism, sexism, homophobia, and heteronormism. MLE for digital ethics and online safety sees digital media environments as potentially dangerous places where people tend to take more risks because consequences seem remote. Because digital environments and multi-media mobile communication are very new and suddenly ubiquitous, people need guidance and critical discussion of emerging ethical norms, which MLE facilitates. Best practices allow learners to discuss their experiences of the real consequences of digital behavior face-to-face, to practice and critically discuss simulated digital decision making in risky scenarios, and to debate ethical dilemmas involving the topics listed above. Critiques of digital ethics and online safety approaches point to the heavy negative focus on fear of dangerous new media and to the deficit model of learning. Worst practices tend towards prescribed ethics and character education with right answers and correct behavior rather than constructivist approaches involving robust ethics debate, reflective practice, and critical discussion of real experiences in virtual worlds. Opportunities to practice online safety and digital ethics are also complicated by issues of limited online computer access in schools and communities, as well as regulations prohibiting mobile media in many k-12 environments. Advocates of this strand engage people of all ages, but especially children and young people, in MLE practice applied to their online and mobile media

participation to protect them from negative psychological, physical and economic consequences of unethical behavior by themselves and others.

Digital Ethics & Online Safety: Key Organizations

The **Family Online Safety Institute (FOSI)** is an international, non-profit membership organization working to develop a safer Internet by identifying and promoting best practices, tools and methods that also respect free speech. They help shape public policy by highlighting new technologies, promoting education and convening special events. One major initiative involves the first ladies of countries in Mexico and the Dominican Republic as spokespeople for Internet safety initiatives in their countries. Key contact: Stephen Balkam.

Common Sense Media has as its mission improving the lives of kids and families by providing the trustworthy information, education, and independent voice they need to thrive in a world of media and technology. This organization recently picked up the work of the Kaiser Family Foundation, which for many years conducted regular surveys of the media use habits of children and adolescents. Key contacts: Linda Burch.

Critical Media Literacy



This strand is set apart from others under the big tent by its overt politics of social justice. Critical media literacy approaches oscillate between the poles of protectionist and empowerment paradigms. Most approaches within the strand skew to protectionism by using MLE to address learners' vulnerability and help resist oppressive media. Also, unlike many empowerment strands, critical media literacy embraces issues of health, digital ethics, online safety, and media reform, with an emphasis on identity politics. Some critical media literacy approaches skew towards empowerment by focusing on learners' abilities to identify and address social problems through their own agency, supported by MLE in reflective media use, discussion, organization, and production. All critical media literacy approaches take a special interest in disadvantaged groups. The critical media literacy strand takes a balanced approach to inquiry, using all the key questions and core concepts of MLE for analysis and production, with extra emphasis on "Who is harmed, who benefits and who is left out?" This strand helps learners demystify how meaning and culture are made from media in order to understand ideology, resist oppressive communications and representations, and use media for social change. Educators take time to help learners understand techniques of encoding and decoding meanings in media texts, linking textual power to personal, social and cultural discourses. MLE offers learners access to the means of production for making cultural meanings from media texts, in analysis and production, through negotiating, opposing, resisting, and countering oppressive representations in dominant media, rather than accepting preferred meanings and reproducing the status quo. Educators also encourage learners to seek out and create independent media about under-

represented issues significant to local communities and to the learners themselves. Topics include issues of representation, sexual exploitation, desensitization to violence and war, police brutality, poverty, glorification of drugs and alcohol use, censorship, corporate media control, stereotypes, religious persecution, racism, sexism, homophobia, and heteronormism, particularly in entertainment and advertising media where such insidious representations may be taken for granted or normalized. Critical media literacy also takes aim at the distractions of entertainment and news media from meaningful social issues, which are often neglected, trivialized, or sensationalized. The strand takes advantage of new media technologies to allow students to post commentary, critiques, and their own media texts to promote social justice. Best practices balance analysis and production activities, and take care to embrace learner-centered, constructivist pedagogy by struggling to balance a focus on questions of social justice with honoring complex identities of learners who may benefit or take pleasure in popular media representations. Worst practices over-emphasize analysis without action or activist media production without reflection, and privilege teacher interests, readings, and opinions over the inquiry process and autonomous agency of learners. Critical media literacy is practiced in diverse settings of formal and informal education in schools and communities led by teachers, activists, politicians, scholars, philanthropists, and citizens interested in social justice.

Critical Media Literacy: Key Organizations

The **Media Education Foundation** produces and distributes documentary films and other educational resources to inspire critical thinking about the social, political, and cultural impact of American mass media. Contact: Sut Jhally, Founder and Professor at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Media Matters Action Network is a progressive research and information center dedicated to analyzing and correcting conservative misinformation, defined as "news or commentary presented in the media that is not accurate, reliable, or credible and that forwards the conservative agenda." An annual feature on the Media Matters website is the title of "Misinformers of the Year," which is awarded to the journalist, commentator, and/or network which, in the opinion of Media Matters, was responsible for the most numerous and/or grievous factual errors and claims. Founded by journalist David Brock in 2004, the organization provides a full range of resources to assist the larger progressive community in creating and disseminating progressive information and views.

Prominent Strands in the Empowerment Paradigm

This section details the ideas and practices of educators in each of the seven strands of the empowerment paradigm along with profiles of key players for potential partnerships.

Broadband Adoption



This strand emerged over the past five years to address the “digital divide” as more than 100 million Americans do not have Internet access in the home. In early 2009, Congress directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to develop a National Broadband Plan to ensure every American has access to the Internet by achieving affordability and maximizing use of broadband to advance “consumer welfare, civic participation, public safety and homeland security, community development, health care delivery, energy independence and efficiency, education, employee training, private sector investment, entrepreneurial activity, job creation and economic growth, and other national purposes.” Federal economic stimulus monies enabled the Department of Commerce’s National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to spend \$4.7 billion to support the deployment of broadband infrastructure, enhance and expand public computer centers, encourage sustainable adoption of broadband service. As a result, all 50 states are developing partnerships with community organizations to promote digital literacy. In addition, under pressure from the FCC, technology and media companies are spending \$4 billion to provide affordable broadband access for eligible families as part of the Connect to Compete Initiative. Low-income families will be eligible to receive refurbished computers and high-speed Internet for a small monthly fee. Proponents say that large-scale federal and private investments are necessary to enable rural and low-income Americans to benefit from the digital information revolution. Critics note that both BTOP and Connect to Compete initiatives dictate that large sums of monies be spent on technology infrastructure, hardware and software but rely on volunteers to offer instructional services to low-income communities.

Broadband Adoption: Key Organizations

The **Federal Communications Commission** regulates interstate and international communications by radio, television, wire, satellite and cable in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and U.S. territories. They promote competition, innovation and investment in broadband services, revise regulations so that new technologies flourish alongside diversity and localism, and provide leadership in strengthening the defense of the nation’s communications infrastructure. Contact: Julius Genachowski, Mignon Clyburn. Former FCC commissioner Michael Copps has a special interest in media literacy.

The **National Telecommunications and Information Administration** (NTIA), a branch of the Department of Commerce, advises the President on telecommunications and information policy issues. They have spearheaded broadband Internet access and

adoption in America, expanding the use of spectrum by all users, and ensuring that the Internet remains an engine for continued innovation and economic growth. Contact: Larry Strickling, Angela Simpson.

The **New America Foundation** is a nonprofit, nonpartisan public policy institute that invests in new thinkers and new ideas to address the next generation of challenges facing the United States. This work is responding to the changing conditions and problems of the 21st Century information-age economy. The Open Technology Initiative (OTI) formulates policy and regulatory reform to open source communications networks. Contact: Josh Breitbart. He has a deep interest in digital and media literacy. In his work at New America, he coordinates a team of researchers, organizers, graphic designers and technologists to learn how people adopt new technologies and participate in discussions of telecommunications policy.

The **Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy** was a blue ribbon panel of seventeen media, policy and community leaders that met in 2008 and 2009 to assess the information needs of communities, and recommend measures to help Americans better meet those needs. Its report, *Informing Communities: Sustaining Democracy in the Digital Age*, was the first major commission on media since the Hutchins Commission in the 1940's and the Kerner and Carnegie Commissions of the 1960's. According to the report, "In the digital age, technological, economic and behavioral changes are dramatically altering how Americans communicate. Information is more fragmented. Communications systems no longer run along the same lines as local governance. The gap in access to digital tools and skills is wide and troubling. This new era poses major challenges to the flow of news and information people depend on to manage their complex lives. The Commission's aims are to maximize the availability and flow of credible local information; to enhance access and capacity to use the new tools of knowledge and exchange; and to encourage people to engage with information and each other within their geographic communities. Among its 15 recommendations the Commission argues for universal broadband, open networks, transparent government, a media and digitally literate populace, vibrant local journalism, public media reform, and local public engagement." Renee Hobbs wrote one of eight white papers commissioned to turn the report into a plan of action. Contact: Charles Firestone is a longtime advocate of media literacy. He sponsored the first Aspen Institute on Media Literacy in the early

Digital Literacy

a.k.a. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Literacy, esp. internationally



This strand extends the efforts towards universal access of the broadband adoption strand by helping learners to use digital tools, to practice digital ethics and safety, and to collaborate online as means to economic and academic opportunity. Digital literacy focuses on issues of access around digital inclusion, closing the digital divide, and helping "digital immigrants" move towards using technology with the same fluency as "digital natives." This involves

efficiently choosing digital tools to search for and communicate information, and asking key questions about the credibility and reliability of sources and messages. Thus, the digital literacy strand grows out of broadband adoption to include aspects of information literacy in order to help learners acquire practical skills for avoiding hoaxes, fraud, phishing scams, identity theft, spam, and ad overload when using online media. Practitioners position learners who are comfortable with technology (“natives”) as mentors for learners who are uncomfortable or new to digital media (“immigrants”). They also support discussions and exercises with all learners about safe and ethical digital practices for being a good digital citizen. Citizenship in the digital literacy strand mostly involves good individual behavior online around privacy, copyright, and harassment, as well as developing skills to find jobs, services and to become a responsible consumer (as opposed to conceptions of citizenship in other MLE strands as adding to the marketplace of ideas, participating in community action, or taking up activist causes to correct misrepresentations or under-representations of people and issues in media). Practitioners support learners in gaining “threshold” (or beginner) skills for computer, web, and mobile media to seek and find jobs, as well as life skills in evaluating and using consumer information for finding and procuring health services and other goods online. “Advanced” digital literacy involves practice with authoring tools for document creation, website building, image manipulation, video editing, desktop publishing, document, photo, and video sharing, and social networking. Practitioners support learners in using social media and media text production tools to expand business and work opportunities, as well as to support academics. Social media literacy, using tools for exposure and networking connections, is a phrase related to digital literacy used by marketing and business consultants who promise access to new business opportunities and models through web 2.0. Government agencies claim digital literacy as a vital initiative to make investments in broadband adoption through the Recovery Act pay off for the U.S. economy and workforce. Educators claim digital literacy as a key component of 21st century skills initiatives that drive efforts at revising standards to reflect new cultural and economic demands of the digital age. Digital literacy is sometimes used by educators as a catch-all for effective use of digital tools for any given purpose or discipline. Critics contend that the focus on tool use and threshold skills with ICTs makes the digital literacy strand offer learners too little practice with the critical thinking they will need to be effective communicators and agents of change, in culture and in the workplace, regardless of their comfort level with using digital media (natives or immigrants). The idea of fluency in digital media does not take into account the need for critical distance and habits of inquiry to assess diverse discourse communities in order to participate widely in diverse digital cultures. Advocates see digital literacy as a practical necessity for keeping up with the skill demands of ever-changing technology in order to compete for jobs, procure services, and find quality information in our evolving digital economy.

Digital Literacy: Key Organizations

The **Partnership for 21st Century Skills** was formed in 2002 to serve as a catalyst to position 21st century readiness at the center of US K12 education by building collaborative partnerships among education, business, community and government leaders. Contact: Barbara Stein is the director of strategic partnerships. Helen Soule, formerly the executive director of Cable in the Classroom, is director of state initiatives.

Digital Media and Learning



This strand helps learners explore new media and participate in digital cultures to pursue their interests while learning new media literacy skills from their experiences with other users in online affinity groups. Practitioners portend to be extremely learner-centered, prioritizing high engagement, play, individual interests, peer mentoring, and affinity-based collaboration as keys to learning. They embrace new digital tools (including video games, social networking hubs, and virtual worlds in addition to media text authoring tools) for exploring knowledge, solving problems, expressing opinions, creating and remixing new media texts, spreading messages, and socializing with peers to share skills and interests. The digital media and learning strand of MLE has its roots in New Literacies studies, particularly by scholars of the New London Group, and Media Studies of participatory and convergence cultures, especially the work of scholar Henry Jenkins. As in New Literacies studies, learners are seen as possessing valuable skills and interests that manifest in their local or lay literacies, and educators are charged with moving these literacies to the center of practice from which to grow (instead of prioritizing official school or workplace literacy). Through a white paper in 2006, Henry Jenkins and his colleagues at M.I.T. proposed an influential approach to new media literacies, which, while acknowledging core MLE concerns with addressing inequities in access (participation gap) and understanding media influence (transparency problem), also identifies eleven skill areas essential for engaging in participatory cultures of new media. Digital media and learning practitioners prioritize these new media literacies of play (free exploration and experimentation as problem solving), performance (role-playing in different identities for diverse purposes), simulation (interpreting and constructing virtual worlds), multi-tasking (managing attention resources), appropriation (sampling and remixing), distributed cognition (using tools to expand cognitive power), collective intelligence (pooling knowledge), judgment (evaluating credibility and reliability, as in “old” MLE), transmedia navigation (following narratives across multiple media modes), networking (sharing and spreading media messages), and negotiation (adjusting communication practices for diverse discourse communities). In addition to issues of participation and transparency, Jenkins also proposes that new MLE must address the ethics challenge presented by emerging new media cultures. Best practices in digital media and learning take up the ethics challenge by including critical discussions about the consequences of media use, online behavior, and emerging social norms. These practices often take up the discourse of digital citizenship as learners become active participants in shaping the norms of online

communities through their commentary, votes, creation of new media messages, promotion of preferred causes and information, and linking and networking practices. Worst practices encourage immersion in digital cultures and indulgence of personal interests without emphasis on reflective practice and critical discussion, thus forfeiting the goals of core MLE questions to help learners understand the individual, social and cultural costs, benefits and implications of one's tastes, habits of mind, and participation in media use. Critics of the digital media and learning strand believe that most learners will be more likely to reproduce oppressive ideologies in media culture than to develop critical thinking skills with such emphasis on participation. Some critics also worry that, with emphases on affinity groups and personal interests, learners from disadvantaged groups will not gain access to cultures of power and economic opportunity without more direct educational intervention to learn the language and skills of mobility and prosperity. Advocates believe that the paths to success in the emerging networked information economies depend upon nurturing new media literacies for engaging in participatory digital cultures, and that supporting the motivated engagement of all learners through informal settings and popular culture in digital media is the key to transforming a failing education system.

Digital Media and Learning: Key Organizations

The **Digital Media and Learning Program of the MacArthur Foundation** aims to determine how digital media are changing the way young people learn, play, socialize and participate in civic life. Launched in 2006, they have spent \$85 million on research projects and the development of innovative new technologies. They have supported the development of new learning environments for youth, including the Digital Youth Network in Chicago, as well as Quest to Learn, a New York City middle school based on game design principles. Contact: Connie Yowell.

Institute on Multimedia Literacy, University of Southern California. A division of the School of Cinematic Arts, their mission is to empower people in the interpretation and design of media to be more engaged, active and critical citizens for the 21st century. They help faculty and students incorporate multimedia skills, authorship and critical analysis in courses that might not otherwise incorporate such avenues of expression. They promote effective and expressive communication and scholarly production through the use of multiple media applications and tools. Contact: Holly Wilis is the Director of Academic Programs. Steve Anderson is an assistant professor of interactive media.

Youth Media



This strand helps learners find their voices and express themselves by telling their own stories through media. Youth media educators support learners in using media production tools to create and spread their own ideas.

Approaches emphasize thinking about key questions of audience, and messages and meanings, from a media maker's point of view. Activities include examining learners' media tastes and creative interests, working in groups to develop message ideas, experimenting with media production tools, producing media messages, sharing critical feedback throughout the production process, broadcasting or spreading new media texts, and becoming part of online communities for sharing creative work. Although distinguished by its focus on youth voice and agency, the youth media strand of MLE is often intertwined with protectionist strands and other empowerment strands around common goals of active, engaged citizenship. Youth media facilitators often steer learners toward pro-social issues, and encourage learners to make media that takes pride in local communities and heritages while addressing local issues. Youth media positions learners as having powerful voices that will benefit from the acquisition and development of skills for thinking about and producing media messages. Empowerment is loosely conceptualized as expressions of learner's voices and pursuit of youth interests, and sometimes involves the acquisition of vocational media skills in technology use and production processes. Critics contend that the youth media strand of MLE does not do enough to critique learners' reproduction of status quo and oppressive ideologies in their own media productions. However, best practices in youth media offer learners practice with key questions and concepts of MLE throughout the production process, which, advocates claim, allows learners to discuss and direct their own concerns about the effects of the media they make and use.

Youth Media: Key Organizations

Alliance for Community Media (ACM) promotes civic engagement through community media. Their annual conference is held July 31 – August 2 in Chicago. The Youth Media Summit will consist of four one-day symposiums to provide a public forum for discussion about media and news literacy in America. Participants shall include educators, community leaders, media professionals, journalists, nonprofit leaders, policymakers and students. The first is scheduled in Philadelphia on May 8, 2012.

The **Educational Video Center (EVC)** is a non-profit youth media organization dedicated to teaching documentary video as a means to develop the artistic, critical literacy, and career skills of young people, while nurturing their idealism and commitment to social change. EVC is an internationally acclaimed leader in youth media education and uses a teaching methodology that brings together the powerful traditions of student-centered progressive education and independent community documentary. Contact: Steve Goodman, Founding Director.

Youth Radio is a non-profit media arts organization in Oakland, California, that promotes young people's intellectual, creative, and professional growth through education and access to media. Youth Radio's media education, broadcast journalism, technical training and production activities provide unique opportunities in social, professional and leadership development for youth, ages 14-24. By connecting youth with their communities through media literacy and professional development, they become active partners in civic engagement. Contact: Lissa Soep, Erik Sakamoto.

News Literacy



This strand helps learners understand and participate in the roles and responsibilities that newsmakers, news consumers, news texts, and news organizations play in a healthy society. Practitioners focus on key questions of representation and reality, and of techniques used to construct messages in the news. In the U.S., news literacy education takes on a Journalism School approach, assuming freedom of the press and the value of news industries as “the fourth estate” in a democracy, and teaching the news values that define “quality” news and information, including a story’s relevance, timeliness, accuracy, fairness, balance, “objective” tone, and appeal. News literacy approaches also critically discuss how the organization of news production affects the quality of news in terms of news values as processed through sources, reporters, editors, and gatekeepers. In the U.S., news literacy in MLE positions learners as responsible for developing habits of seeking and evaluating quality news in order to contribute powerfully to a strong democracy as well-informed citizens. Practitioners nurture healthy skepticism and oppose cynicism to motivate informed civic participation over apathy. Activities include keeping news journals, close analyses of accuracy and bias (or framing, agenda setting, etc.) in news reports, analytic discussion of the construction of news reports, comparisons of different news sources, learner-produced news media, and simulations of news production organizations. Global versions of the news literacy strand in MLE encourage more critical inquiry and discussion about media industries and state ideologies, comparative media institutions (public, private and hybrid systems), changes in news production and consumer practices with participatory media (blogs, twitter, etc.), and the resulting relationships between media literacy and citizenship via participation in the news cycle. Critics see the U.S. approach to news literacy as a last ditch effort on the part of failing news industries to develop engaged audiences who identify with the values of the old guard of “quality” news. Advocates see news literacy as a vital means for empowering citizens with the skills to be well-informed decisions makers (in democracies with press freedoms, like the U.S.) and to participate in the conversation about how news is (and should or shouldn’t be) changing in the new media landscape. News literacy is found in diverse settings of practice from high school journalism and English classes, to college media studies and journalism courses, as well as in extra curricular community programs sponsored by public media outlets.

News Literacy: Key Organizations

The **Center for News Literacy**, developed at Stony Brook University by former Newsday editor Howard Schneider, offers college students a course designed to help them apply critical thinking skills to the search for reliable information. The program began in 2006 as a response to the growing concern over the lack of civic knowledge among young Americans and the apparent ease with which false or misleading information becomes "fact" in the digital age. They offer curriculum materials and a summer institute for teachers. Contact: Dean Miller, Director.

The **Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting** is a non-profit journalism organization dedicated to supporting independent international journalism. The Center focuses on under-reported topics, promoting high-quality international reporting, and creating platforms that reach broad and diverse audiences. Their educational programs provide students with fresh information on global issues, help them think critically about the creation and dissemination of news, and inspire them to become active consumers and producers of information. Contact: Nathalie Applewhite.

The **News Literacy Project** is an educational program that mobilizes current or former journalists to help middle school and high school students sort fact from fiction in the digital age. The project teaches students critical-thinking skills that enable them to be smarter and more frequent consumers and creators of credible information across all media and platforms. Programs are underway in New York City, Chicago and the Washington, D.C. area. Contact: Alan Miller.

NewsTrust is a non-profit online community that helps people find and share good journalism online, so they can make more informed decisions as citizens. They offer a range of tools to empower citizens to access quality news and information -- and learn to separate fact from fiction about important public issues. Their web review tools enable people to rate stories for accuracy, fairness, sourcing, context and other core journalistic principles. Contact: Fabrice Florin.

Link TV's **Know the News** is an online learning tool for journalism students and citizen journalists, exploring the issues that shape television news, including bias, authorship, authenticity, ethics, and media ownership. Using Link TV's original productions Global Pulse and Latin Pulse, learners get to compare, contrast and analyze news coverage from more than 70 broadcasters worldwide. Contact: Kim Spencer, Evelyn Messinger.

Information Literacy



This strand helps learners to efficiently access diverse information and media tools, and to evaluate the creditability and reliability of sources and information in media texts. The information literacy strand has a rich history among librarians, now media specialists, and reaches out through IT departments and all areas of academic research, as well as community, consumer, and business education, to support learners in developing the skills they need to effectively search, navigate, sort, share, cite, and use diverse information with a variety of media tools. Practitioners focus on issues of access, key concepts of authorship credibility, and the key question, “How does the media text reflect, reinforce, shape, or distort reality?” In our time of information overload, information literacy offers guidance in developing effective habits of media use to manage one’s attention, multi-tasking, media tools, text choices, and time in order to improve efficacy as a citizen, worker, and consumer in a media saturated society. Common activities include digital search activities, research citation practice, analytic discussion of information quality, critical evaluation of information sources, exercises in problem solving using digital tools, group projects with tools for digital collaboration, and practice with various digital media tools for sorting, sharing and presenting information. In today’s era of cut and paste information sharing, information literacy often involves critical discussion of issues around plagiarism, copyright, fair use, originality, creativity, influence, intellectual property, and attribution. In these discussions, best practices in information literacy include asking, “What are the historical, social and cultural contexts for the messages?” to engage critical thinking about transformativeness, propriety, and attribution. Worst practices focus on tool training without critical reflection and prescribing rote rules about what and how found media and information can be used in learners’ own work. Most MLE strands integrate the information literacy practices. However, critics see a focus on information literacy without integration with other MLE practices as too celebratory of tool use and media participation without supporting critical inquiry about issues of representation, the construction of media messages, and the socialization influences of media. Advocates see information literacy as a way to bring vital academic, consumer, citizen and workplace skills to all people without getting mixed up in political issues.

Information Literacy: Key Organizations

The **American Library Association** is the largest library organization in the world. The organization equips and leads advocates for libraries, library issues and the library profession, and plays a key role in formulating legislation, policies and standards that affect library and information services. The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) and the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) are two divisions of ALA that are especially active in promoting information literacy. President: Roberta Stevens.

Visual Literacy



This strand helps learners to understand how we make meaning with the “languages” of particular modes of media that construct messages. Visual literacy gives learners practice in slowing down the automatic cognitive processing commonly engaged with visual media to understand how production choices (angle, distance, composition, lighting, etc.) construct messages and influence emotional responses to media texts. Stretching back to the beginning of art history as an academic discipline, visual literacy practitioners have a long, rich history of engaging learners in close analyses of classic works of art, photographs, film and other visual texts. John Berger’s 1972 book and TV series, *Ways of Seeing*, first popularized the concept of visual literacy in Europe and the United States.

Educators embraced the idea of visual literacy as a set of abilities that enables an individual to effectively find, interpret, evaluate, use, and create images. By equipping a learner to understand and analyze the contextual, cultural, ethical, aesthetic, intellectual, and technical components involved in the production and use of visual materials, a visually literate individual is both a critical consumer of visual media and a competent contributor to a body of shared knowledge and culture. Practitioners emphasize many of the ethical, legal, social, and economic issues surrounding the creation and use of images.

Analysis focuses on key questions including:

- What techniques are used to construct messages?
- What are the historical, social and cultural contexts for the messages?

In addition to textual analysis and production, activities include research on the historical contexts and cultural effects of significant media texts, artists, producers and their audiences. Best practices in MLE in the visual literacy strand balance opportunities to employ concepts from critical discussion of media analyses in learners’ own production of visual and multimodal media texts. Worst practices involve teacher-led “right” readings of media messages and analyses of techniques without reflective practice in media production. Critics of visual literacy point to an over-emphasis on labeling art and design terminology at the expense of critical inquiry about the political economy of media production and issues of representation. Other critics see the work as too narrowly drawing on the discipline of perceptual psychology without sensitivity to cultural studies perspectives. Advocates see textual analysis techniques of visual literacy as the foundation and heart of MLE, empowering individuals to understand, enrich, and control their own meaning making processes from media, and to extend that control to understand cultural influences of media and to direct their own media communication.

Visual Literacy: Key Organizations

The **International Visual Literacy Association (IVLA)** provides a forum for the exchange of information related to visual literacy. They explore education, instruction

and training in modes of visual communication and their application through the concept of visual literacy to individuals, groups, organizations, and to the public in general.

Visual Understanding in Education is an organization developed by Abigail Housen which supports the development of aesthetic and language literacy and critical thinking skills through teacher education, offering workshops, curriculum and training programs to educators in New England and around the nation.

Appendix 1: Settings of Practice, MLE Strands in Context

Where does MLE happen? How do particular settings affect practice? This section profiles how each prominent type of MLE setting shapes practitioners' approaches through the particular concerns and constraints of the community.

K-12 English Language Arts. English teachers are a natural fit for MLE, as they recognize their students' interests and uses of media, and the role they can play in developing critical thinking about the media messages learners receive and create. Literacy is the language arts teacher's domain. While many are open to expanding notions of literacy to include a variety of multimodal media and popular texts, traditional print literacy is still the prime focus, and MLE is most often used as a way to engage, recognize and transfer critical thinking skills from more popular media back to the written word. Some teachers are reluctant to relinquish the role of "sage on the stage" to share expertise with students in MLE practice. Others feel uncomfortable spending time on popular culture texts when students are unlikely to encounter the riches of high literature anywhere else. Still others feel that the English curriculum is already overcrowded and it is unreasonable to expect teachers to cover all kinds of media texts and skills. However, most English teachers integrate aspects of MLE to support existing curricula.

English teachers use information literacy approaches to teach research techniques and writing. They connect news literacy with reading and writing non-fiction, understanding bias, and representing reality. They use critical media literacy to connect the media in students everyday lives to literary themes of social justice, and they sometimes choose literature with media reform themes, like *Fahrenheit 451* and *1984*. They use youth media approaches to enhance and expand the composition process. They teach about persuasion and propaganda for public speaking and writing using analysis of political communication, PR, and advertising. They critically analyze and discuss film techniques and encourage multimedia production projects to demonstrate knowledge and communication skills. They study multimodal techniques in digital texts and graphic novels, like *Maus* and *Persepolis*, as well as transmedia storytelling and adaptation from page to screen. English teachers adopt approaches from all MLE strands, from health and online safety to digital literacy, to meet curricular goals and standards as well as to fulfill personal and community interests.

K-12 Social Studies. Although social studies curricula commonly include media literacy standards, teachers seldom use constructivist pedagogy and favor studying established facts and historical truths over critical inquiry into constructedness, issues of representation, and points of view in media texts of history and current events. Complex approaches to history, historical documents, and power that are common in higher education social studies, and in MLE, seldom find their way into K-12 classrooms. However, social studies teachers engage fully in practicing information literacy with historical research, especially for evaluating sources and quality of information. Teachers embrace fact-checking aspects of media literacy. News literacy is sometimes employed

for analysis of bias and agenda setting in studying current events. Occasionally, visual literacy approaches are applied to historical photographs and political posters. Propaganda techniques are studied from various eras.

There is great room for growth towards embracing MLE practices in K-12 Social Studies, and practitioners are likely to follow the example of museums and other educational institutions who make MLE connections to history.

K-12 Art. Art teachers engage in MLE through approaches of visual literacy, youth media, and digital ethics strands. Art teachers focus on the visual techniques for communicating messages through analyzing paintings and photographs from different historical contexts. Students use these techniques in their own artwork, in multiple media, and critically discuss ethical issues around copying and borrowing images, techniques and ideas. Although work is often shared with and critiqued by authentic audiences, teachers focus on students voice and personal expression rather than efficacy in targeting mass audiences. K-12 art often uses pop art, advertising and propaganda posters as models for understanding and using visual techniques.

K-12 Health. MLE for health is commonly practiced in k-12 settings to address dangerous media messages related to issues of body image, self esteem, obesity, eating disorders, hygiene, smoking, drugs and alcohol, violence, sex, and risk behaviors. While much of health curricula proceeds from accepted scientific facts and community values about healthy lifestyles to train behaviors and deliver knowledge, some practitioners use MLE approaches of critical inquiry and discussion to help learners negotiate complex issues in diverse educational communities. Students are often assigned to create public service media for the school community to raise awareness and influence behavior around health issues.

K-12 Science. Although rare, some science teachers use MLE approaches to explore representations of scientific information in magazine articles, pictures, infographics, and documentaries.

K-12 Journalism. Mostly in high school, journalism classes are responsible for publishing school newspapers, producing closed-circuit broadcasts of school announcements, and maintaining school news blogs. Teachers use some aspects of youth media and news literacy strands of MLE to inform practice as they help students reproduce professional news values. There is seldom time for critical reflection in the production process, so MLE approaches are often neglected. However, some journalism courses require study and discussion of news, and changes in the new media landscape.

K-12 Media Production. These classes most often approach MLE from the youth media strand, focusing on learners' voices and addressing local school issues and audiences by making media for school projects, school events, public service announcements, and community video festivals. Interdisciplinary work is common, which may encourage the application of media literacy practice to other subjects through media production. Also,

some practitioners gear classes towards critical media literacy, supporting learners in discussions of how their work represents groups of people and can address social issues.

K-12 Technology & Computer Ed (Voc. Ed). Although ed tech practitioners have historically taken vocational approaches to technical skill training instead of critical thinking development, with the rise of participatory media and demands of new businesses for more critical and savvy communicators with technical competencies, these courses are beginning to include aspects of MLE from strands of youth media, and digital ethics and online safety. However, there are rarely connections to history, media message analysis, cultural aspects of media messages, nor citizenship in these classes.

K-12 Library/Media Specialists and IT professionals. These practitioners are often the best advocates for using media and technology in the classrooms for their schools and the faculty they support. Increasingly, this involves advocating and modeling MLE approaches, particularly from information literacy, digital literacy and digital media and learning perspectives. Library/media specialists often host classes from different disciplines in library computer labs to teach information literacy for research projects. They are particularly fond of turning students on to the rich primary documents available on websites of museums, and contrasting quality information and reliable sources with propaganda and misinformation. They are also attracted to interactive media that brings historical information to life and engages students in inquiry. These practitioners often blog to wide audiences of educators and spread the word about hot media resources through social networks and nings.

Extra-curricular youth programs. Youth programs run the gamut of MLE practice, but most often involve a focus on pro-social media production practices of critical media literacy and youth media strands. Social justice and local issues of violence and media representation are common themes. Outings to local exhibits to inspire ideas for youth media productions are also common.

Lifelong Learning/ community programs

At community centers, public media stations, libraries, and religious centers, MLE practitioners serve adults and seniors, most often with training in digital literacy approaches. Sometimes visual literacy and critical media literacy are practiced in film club atmospheres or with community storytelling themes. Most programs aim to help adults gain skills with media and technology for employment, and to access and evaluate digital information for personal use as consumers and citizens. Some programs involve media production for community voice, commerce, and activism. Many MLE community programs leaders are interested in strengthening democracy and extending digital skills for civic engagement.

Libraries. Libraries commonly serve as places for poor communities to learn digital literacy and information literacy through public computer labs. Some libraries partner with schools for more advanced MLE efforts through health, online safety and digital ethics, and youth media and digital media and learning.

College and University general education intro courses in communication fundamentals. Many colleges and universities require general communication fundamentals courses with MLE approaches from critical media literacy, youth media, information literacy, and digital media and learning strands aimed at expanding reading, writing and critical thinking skills to multiple media, as well as addressing issues of responsible research and creativity related to plagiarism, citation, copyright, and fair use. Courses often cover persuasion techniques for speech and writing, as well as visual modes.

Media & Communication Studies. Intro courses in Media & Society and Media in Everyday Life sometimes include broad view MLE practices. Courses in media production can coincide with youth media and news literacy practices. Courses in media institutions and critical cultural studies of media include MLE practices of critical media literacy and media reform strands. However, most Media Studies departments in higher education persist in transmission model pedagogy, requiring directed readings and right responses in tests and papers, as well as adherence to industry standards for production values, aesthetics, and conventions in message delivery for courses in media making (without critical discussion or constructivist approaches). Early 20th century media and propaganda is often covered by practitioners of courses in comparative media cultures, news media history, and political communication.