6.

LITERACY: UNDERSTANDING MEDIA AND HOW THEY WORK

Renee Hobbs

What society needs from media in the age of digital communication is *literacy* in understanding media, they ways they operate, and what it means for society,

All over the world, from the most affluent urban cities to the poorest slums, children grow up with mass media, popular culture and digital media. Today people experience a surfeit of information and entertainment choices that require them to use increased discrimination in evaluating the content and value of media messages. For many years, advocates, reformers, educators, and public officials – and the media industry – have made sustained efforts in the U.S. and around the world to advance public understanding of mass media, digital media and popular culture in the hopes of transforming passive consumers into critical users and active citizens.

Because people are now using media in new ways and the volume of information shared is enormous, "all citizens need to have the ability to access, analyze and evaluate images, sounds and texts on a daily basis especially if they are to use traditional and new media to communicate and create media content.[207] This concept

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[207] O'Neill, Brian. (2010). Current policy developments in European media literacy. *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics* 6(2): 235-241, p. 236.

is frequently identified by the term *media literacy*, although other terms are also used, including media education, digital literacy, media competence, transliteracy, ICT literacy, just to name a few. At the root of it, media literacy is based on a simple and sensible idea: if the public learns more about how newspapers, magazines, movies, TV shows, radio programs, the Internet, apps and social media are constructed, they will develop critical perspectives that help them discriminate between quality and trash. They will be active (not passive) in their media use habits and make good choices. They will be more connected to influential networks and less susceptible to propaganda and shallow sensationalism.[208] The rise of the Internet and social media has intensified the need to build people's knowledge and competencies in using technology and in accessing, analyzing, creating and sharing media, as digital tools are not part of many information-age jobs. People also need opportunities to reflect upon media influence on individuals and society and take appropriate forms of social and political action using media texts, tools and technologies.[209]

All around the globe, the Internet and social media provide new opportunities for people to use the power of communication to meet their personal, economic, social and political goals. They need better understanding of these media to use them for greatest benefit. Today, stakeholders in the media literacy movement include parents, librarians, technologists, educators, public health professionals, artists, cultural critics and political activists. Some are motivated by the impulse to protect people from the potential risks and harms associated with exposure to mass media and digital media; others are motivated by the empowerment opportunities created by the use of mass and digital media. But individuals

working in educational institutions, non-profit organizations, government, and religious organizations have faced a particular set of opportunities, limitations and constraints when initiating and implementing media literacy programs in both formal and informal settings.

In some parts of Europe, including Scandinavian countries, government support for media literacy education is robust and authentic. In other nations of Europe, media literacy is most likely to be advanced by non-profit and non-governmental organizations working to influence educational practitioners, sometimes with support from the higher education community. But in North America, media literacy has been actively advanced by some sectors of the media industry since the 1960s. Because the U.S. lacks the national-level cultural organizations or government agencies comparable to the British Film Institute or the National Film Board of Canada, active support from media industry stakeholders in the United States has helped to reach some of the 70 million children and teens as well as the 3 million teachers in more than 15,000 school districts.

Media industry support of media literacy initiatives has been controversial. During the 1990s, American educational practitioners split into two factions, largely due to the controversy associated with curriculum materials sponsored by the media industry and the question of whether their professional membership association should accept monies from media companies to support the cost of conference gatherings.[210] Among the "great debates" of the media literacy education community has been the question of the appropriate role of the media industry in helping address the educational needs of children, youth and families. Proponents have argued that the "good that media organizations

[208] Aufderheide, Patricia. (1997). Media literacy: From a report of the National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy. In Robert Kubey (Ed.) *Media literacy in the information age* (pp. 79-88). New York: Transaction Publishers.
[209] Rheinhold, Howard. (2012). *Net smart: How to thrive online.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

[210] Heins, Margorie. & Chu, C. (2003). Media literacy: An alternative to censorship. The Free Expression Policy Project. http://www.fepproject.org/policyreports/medialiteracyintro.html

can do by contributing their funding outweighs the potential dangers" [of the program's use] as part of "a public relations campaign or as a shield against government regulation."[211] Critics have feared that media companies are effectively "taking the anti-media stand out of the media literacy movement to serve their own goals: co-opting the media literacy movement and softening it to make sure that public criticism of the media never gets too loud, abrasive or strident."[212]

But although critics have voiced their fears and frustrations about media industry involvement in media literacy education, the role of the media industry in media literacy education has not been monolithic. In fact, media industry stakeholders have deployed a variety of approaches to media literacy education over the course of more than 50 years. But scholars have yet to explore the precise nature of the industry's influence on the field. After defining digital and media literacy and outlining some of the ways in which it has been implemented in formal and informal education sectors in the U.S. and Europe, I examine how media literacy has been conceptualized by the news media industry, the broadcast and cable television industry, the advertising industry, and the Internet and new media. Media literacy programs, as developed by the media industry, have taken on distinct forms with a focus on creating demand for media products and services; providing information about content, structures, or production processes; offering consumer protection or minimizing risks associated with media use; promoting creative self-expression and active participation in media culture; and challenging media industries to address problematic or ethically questionable practices. In this chapter, I will show that support from media industry stakeholders in the design and implementation of media literacy programs for children and youth has been a source of innovation in advancing the media literacy competencies of citizens.

WHAT IS MEDIA LITERACY?

It has been said that defining media literacy is like the tale of the blind men and the elephant, where each sense a small part of the giant beast and argue about its characteristics and form.[213] The variety of global education systems and the rapid changes in mass media, popular culture and digital media contribute to differences in understanding and opinions among experts, which is to be expected; indeed, is likely that the precise definition of media literacy will continue to be evolve for many years into the future.

What knowledge, competencies and skills are most essential for citizens, producers, users and consumers today? In general, media literacy advocates are aligned with one of two primary perspectives: one emphasizes *empowerment,* focusing on how knowledge and critical thinking skills increase people's active engagement with media in ways that support civic participation, while another emphasizes *protection*, focusing on the potential dangers and risks of exposure to offensive or harmful media content or conduct.[214] The empowerment perspective includes approaches that emphasize *visual literacy,* which is associated with cultivating aesthetic appreciation of photography and film; and *new media literacies,* which are associated with the changing

[211] Hobbs, Renee (1998). The seven great debates in the media literacy movement. *Journal of Communication*, 48(1), 16-32, p. 26
[212] Lewis, Justin, & Jhally, Sut (1998). The struggle over media literacy. *Journal of Communication*, 48(1), 109-120.

[213] Tyner, Kathleen (1991). The media education elephant. Strategies Quarterly. Retrieved on January 1, 2008 from http://www.medialit.org/reading.room/article429.html
[214] Hobbs, Renee & Jensen, Amy Peterson (2009). The past, present, and future of media literacy education. *Journal of Media Literacy Education* 1, 1-11.

nature of participation, play, and identity in the context of the Internet and social media. A protectionist orientation is evident in approaches to media literacy that emphasize *critical perspectives* on media content, media institutions and media ownership, exploring issues of institutional power and examining quality, credibility, equity, social justice, issues of representation and the circulation of ideas in public discourse. Some educators see media literacy as a means to address the complex effects of media on individuals and society while others see it an inevitable expansion of the concept of literacy, including both the receptive and productive dimensions suggestive of the concepts of 'writing' and 'reading.'[215]

Around the globe, the specific terms used for media literacy may vary. In English-speaking nations, the term *media literacy* is conceptualized as a specific set of knowledge, skills and habits of mind, while the term *media literacy education* (or *media education*) is the instructional practices and theoretical frameworks that support the acquisition of media literacy.[216] In Spain, the terms *ICT literacy* is common, and generally signals the practical usage skills needed to use digital media technologies in the workplace; the broader Spanish term *educommunication* may be used to signal the intersection of the two academic disciplines usually associated with media literacy.[217] In Germany, the term *media competence* is used to signal three distinct dimensions, including knowledge about the media, critical reflection including ethical considerations, and media use and creative production.[218] In the

Middle East, the terms for media and information literacy are similarly fluid and evolving.[219]

Most stakeholders agree that at the heart of media literacy education are practices of asking critical questions about what you watch, see, read and listen to (a expanded form of reading) and creating multimedia messages that have personal and social significance and value (an expanded form of writing). As Buckingham has pointed out, the use of the term 'literacy' implies "a broader form of education about media that is not restricted to mechanical skills or narrow forms of functional competence. It suggests a more rounded, humanistic conception that is close to the German notion of Bildung,"[220] where the individual and his or her culture are united, through expression and communication, in the interplay of lifelong learning that includes knowledge, judgment and a deep appreciation of the fine arts.

Media literacy scholars have synthesized decades of theory about media, technology, culture, literacy and education into *key concepts* that represent the foundational principles of the discourse community. These vary from country to country but generally include these ideas: (1) All media are constructions of social reality, carefully crafted to present a particular set of values or a world view; (2) Audiences negotiate meaning in media, interpreting messages based on personal needs and anxieties, the pleasures or troubles of the day, family and cultural background, and other factors; (3) Media messages have a significant form of social power within political, social and economic systems; (4) Messages use a variety of codes and conventions unique to the variety of genres and forms of expression and communication; each medium has its own grammar and codifies reality in its own particular way;

[215] Livingtone, Sonia (2009). *Children and the Internet*. Malden: Polity Press.
[216] Buckingham, David (2006). Defining digital literacy: What do young people need to know about digital media? *Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy* 4,1: 263–276, p. 265.
[217] Torrent, Jordi & Aparici, Roberto. (2009). Educommunication: Citizen Participation and Creativity. Fundacion Kine, Cultural y Educativa and UNICEF Argentina. Availble: http://www.1minutoxmisderechos.org.ar/noticia_popup.php?id_noticia=8
[218] Grafe, Silke (2010). ,Media literacy und Media (literacy) education in den USA. Autum Meeting Section Media Pedagogics of the German Society of Educational Science.

[219] Doha Centre for Media Freedom (2013). Supporting Media and Information Literacy in the Middle East. Doha, Qatar. http://www.dc4mf.org/sites/default/files/mile_experts_meeting_-_report_final.pdf
[220] Buckingham, David (2006). Defining digital literacy: What do young people need to know about digital media? *Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy* 4,1: 263–276, p. 265.

and (5) Media influence the behaviors of individuals and impact larger social and cultural formations across communities, nations and the world.

Synthesizing the practices of lifelong learning from the fields of education, media studies, communication and human development, educators have built upon the work of early 20th century scholars including John Dewey, Paolo Freire and others.[221] They have identified specific competencies for media literacy including *access* skills that involve finding media texts and using technology tools skillfully and sharing appropriate and relevant information with others; *analysis and evaluation* skills that involve comprehending messages and using critical thinking to analyze message quality, veracity, credibility, and point of view, while considering potential effects or consequences of messages; *creative skills* that involve composing or generating content with awareness of purpose, audience and composition techniques; the habit of mind of *reflection* which involves applying social responsibility and ethical principles to one's communication choices and conduct; and the practice of *action*, working individually and collaboratively to share knowledge, using the power of communication and information to address problems in the family, workplace and community, and participating as a member of a community at local, regional, national and international levels.[222]

[221] Dewey, John.(1938). *Experience and education*. New York: Macmillan. Freire, Paolo (1968/1998). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. 30th Anniversary edition. New York: Bloomsbury.
[222] Hobbs, Renee (2010) Digital and Media Literacy: A Plan of Action. Washington D.C.: Aspen Institute and the John L. & James S. Knight Foundation. Available: http://www.knightcomm.org/digital-and-media-literacy-a-plan-of-action/

MEDIA INDUSTRY STAKEHOLDERS FOR MEDIA LITERACY

The media industry has been a significant player in advancing the media literacy competencies of citizens for many years, yet there has been little scholarship that examines this history. A variety of media literacy organizations receive substantial support from media industry firms but none has been more successful at attracting corporate funding than Common Sense Media in San Francisco. This San Francisco based non-profit organization founded by Jim Steyer advocates for child and family issues associated with media and technology. They provide media literacy curriculum materials and professional development to K-12 educators and offer reviews of TV shows, movies, games and apps for parents and families. Media companies like AOL, Netflix and Yahoo! buy licenses to use Common Sense Media reviews, generating nearly 60% of their $13 million annual budget. Comcast, one of the largest cable telecommunication companies in the United States, is one of dozens of media and technology firms that has a multi-year partnership agreement with the non-profit organization.

In part because of their active engagement with dozens of major media industry stakeholders, Common Sense Media is able to pressure the media industry to address issues of concern to parents and families. For example, their advocacy for children's privacy has resulted in the "Do Not Track" bill, which would require Internet companies to obtain consent from teens and from parents of children under 13 before collecting their personal or location information or sending targeted advertising. They also advocate for more effective policies to limit the distribution of sensitive information about students to non-educational, commercial media organizations and other third parties. They provide curriculum resources for educators and families and evaluate media content and technology products for children and teens.

But other media literacy programs that receive support from the media industry have different priorities. Media industry involvement in media literacy has included the perspectives of journalists, the broadcast and cable industry, the advertising industry, the news industry, and Internet and technology industries. Some programs may emphasize the themes of increasing consumer demand for their products and services, address issues of consumer protection or harm reduction, assist consumers in making effective choices of media content, or promote creative self-expression and cultural participation. Table 1 shows a partial list of media literacy initiatives sponsored by the media industry over the past 60 years. While some initiatives have reached a wide audience, others have received less attention. Few of these initiatives have been studied in the context of academic scholarship in media studies or education. But in general, because they reached a large audience, industry-sponsored initiatives in media literacy have had a significant impact on increasing the visibility of media literacy to educational stakeholders and members of the general public.

TABLE 1. Industry-funded media literacy iniatives

TITLE	ORGANIZATION	
Television in Today's World	National Association of Broadcasters	1961
Visual Learning	Kodak	1969
Creating Critical Viewers	ABC Television	1991
Know TV	National Association of Broadcasters	1961
Taking Charge of Your TV	National Cable Television Association	1997
Assignment: Media Literacy	Discovery Channel	1998
Messages & Meanings	Newspaper Association of America	2001
Adobe Youth Voices	Adobe	2006
Media Smart UK	Advertising industry	2007
News Literacy Project	ABC News, Associated Press Buzzfeed and others	2008
Google Digital Literacy & Citizenship	Google	2011
Common Sense Media	Comcast, Cox and others	2011
Pivot: Eyes Wide Open	Participant Media	2013

JOURNALISM: MEDIA LITERACY AS A MEANS TO INCREASE CONSUMER DEMAND

For many years, newspapers and news media have recognized the significance of the education market and have provided educational materials to increase the use of their products and services in schools. More than 50 countries around the world have some form of "newspaper in education" program, generally involving the provision of workshops and educational programs for educators and sometimes the creation of specially-prepared materials designed to introduce students in elementary and secondary schools to news and current events.[223] In the United States, the Newspaper in Education movement helped support the shift in teaching not just about the past, but about the present. For example, during and after WWII, nearly 50% of American high schools offered a civics course entitled, "Problems in Democracy" that included regular reading of newsmagazines like *Time*. By the 1950s, representatives of the newspaper industry had met with the National Council for the Social Studies and the National Council of Teachers of English to develop a program on how to use the daily newspapers in the classroom. In general, from the 1940s to the 1990s, the news media industry has emphasized the role of information about current events, politics, health and science in the practice of learning to become a citizen in a democratic society.[224]

The *New York Times* is perhaps the best example of a contemporary news organization that is emphasizing the value of demystifying the practice of journalism and helping students build critical reading skills. They offer media literacy resources to teachers at their Learning Network, a website with daily lesson plans that encourage students to read, critically analyze and respond in writing to news and opinion articles.[225] These educational materials contain a focus on learning to examine both the form and the content of news stories. This approach to media literacy emphasizes understanding specific characteristics of the form of the variety of news genres within a daily newspaper. One typical lesson plan helped students understand the distinction between news and news analysis, explaining how news analysis, columns and opinions adhere to standards that differ from straight news and Op-Ed pages and encouraging students to make these distinctions as they read the paper.[226]

For many years, newspaper and magazine publishers have viewed educators and students as another target market for their products, placing media education programs squarely under the (unimaginative) leadership of circulation managers. As respect for journalism has declined, former news media professionals have sought to restore its reputation through media literacy educational initiatives. For example, the News Literacy Project, developed by former journalist Alan Miller in 2008 and with partners including ABC News, Associated Press, Buzzfeed and others, offers classroom programs that feature current or former journalists who come to schools to help students learn to distinguish verified information from spin, opinion and propaganda, charging schools $10,000 for six sessions. As interest in news literacy has grown, it has been supported not only by the news media industry, but by philanthropies founded from previous newspaper fortunes made by large chain organizations in earlier eras. The McCormick

[223] Claes, Ellen & Quintellier, Ellen (2009). Newspapers in Education: A critical inquiry into the effects of using newspapers as teaching agents. *Educational Research* 51(3), 341 – 363.
[224] Stanley, William B & Nelson, Jack (1994). The foundations of social education in historical context. In R. Martusewicz and W. Reynolds (Eds.), *Inside/Out: Contemporary critical perspectives in education* (pp. 265 - 289). New York: St Martins Press.

[225] New York Times Learning Network. Available: http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com
[226] Brown, Amanda C. & Schulten, Katherine. (2013, Jan 17). News and 'news analysis:' Navigating fact and opinion in the Times. The Learning Network. Available: http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/01/17/news-and-news-analysis-navigating-fact-and-opinion-in-the-times/?_r=0

Foundation and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation support news literacy initiatives in the United States even as the revenue of newspapers (in the United States) has continued to decline. These news literacy programs focus on the importance of helping young people and educators to appreciate quality journalism, reflecting the assumption that people need to be taught to respect the norms of professional journalism like fairness, accuracy and balance. This approach to media literacy is reflected in Donsbach's observations (in this volume) that a renewed focus on consumer demand is necessary to ensure that the press can perform its historic function in democratic societies.

BROADCAST AND CABLE TELEVISION: MEDIA LITERACY HELPS PEOPLE MAKE SMART CHOICES

Historically, the broadcast and television industry has been involved in advancing media literacy education as far back as the 1960s. In the United States, media industries have made efforts to educate the public about what they do and why it matters, especially when doing so insulates them from unwanted potential government regulation. Since the rise of special interest politics in the mid-1970s, alliances between government and businesses have been highly effective in addressing policy and perception issues in the area of media, children, technology, culture and youth.[227]

One early example of the media industry's involvement in media literacy is the work developed by Roy Danish of the Television Information Office at the National Association of Broadcasters, who created a curriculum in 1961 entitled Television

in Today's Society, which offered a program of instruction to more than 1,000 teachers in the New York City area. The materials included a binder with scripts of thirteen lectures, other print materials, and instructions on how to deliver a course explaining the new medium of television.[228] The program was designed as an in-service training program for teachers or as part of an adult education or college-level course in communications, mass media or broadcasting. In distributing the curriculum materials to educators across the country, it was expected that the local organizer would find suitable local experts on the topics explored in the curriculum. Presumably, local experts would review the printed script or lecture notes as a guide to their own presentations. Each session was planned for about 80 minutes and included a detailed written summary of lectures, a suggested reading list, a quiz-questionnaire, a set of slides, and recommendations for appropriate supplemental 16 mm educational films. The diversity of materials ensured that the program could be flexibly used with different types of high school and adult audiences. This approach set the stage for conceptualizing media literacy as the provision of knowledge about the economic, regulatory and institutional functions of the mass media industry.

By the 1970s, as concerns by parents and teachers increased about television's impact on children's behavior, social science researchers measured the impact but few proposed practical strategies for addressing the potential risks and harms resulting from exposure to problematic media content that included propaganda, violence, sexuality, and racial and ethnic stereotypes. Child development specialists were approaching the study of media as a factor in the cultural environment that was having a negative influence on children's behavior, including their aggressive

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[227] Montgomery, Kathryn (2007). *Generation digital: Politics, commerce, and childhood in the age of the Internet.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

[228] Danish, Roy (1961). Television in Today's World. National Association of Broadcasters, Television Information Office

impulses, imagination, and social skills. In 1980, when Jerome and Dorothy Singer, developmental psychologists at Yale University, received financial support from ABC, an American television network, to develop and disseminate "Creating Critical Viewers," the concept of media literacy and critical viewing became more visible nationwide. This set of lesson plans was designed to teach children media vocabulary words to understand the constructed nature of media messages and help children identify stereotypes, recognize media genres, and discriminate between entertainment, information and persuasion.[229] The effort contributed to the growth of the media literacy movement and the resulting publicity for the program showed that academics could work with television networks to be part of the solution in addressing parental concerns about the negative impact of television on children. This approach positions media literacy as a means to address the problem of harmful media effects, and contemporary scholars, pediatricians and public health experts have found evidence that media literacy can be effective in advancing public health education goals.[230]

More recently, media literacy has been seen as a way to attract media-savvy viewers to new broadcast channels and services. Pivot is a new cable television developed by Participant Media, a film and media production company founded by Jeff Skoll in 2004 to create entertainment that inspires and creates social change. The company has adopted media literacy as a part of their campaign to invite audiences to make a difference in the world through social action campaigns associated with their entertainment products. Their Eyes Wide Open campaign, developed in 2013,

seeks to educate young adults about the power and pitfalls of media, offering tips on the importance of considering the sources of information they consume, recognizing their own role in producing and sharing content, and exploring the trade-offs inherent in giving personal information online.[231]

ADVERTISING: MEDIA LITERACY AS A MEANS TO MINIMIZE POTENTIAL HARMS

During the 1950s, Canadian philosopher and literary critic Marshall McLuhan began suggesting strategies for "reading advertising" using the techniques of literary analysis. His book, *The Mechanical Bride*, demonstrated how values messages were embedded in ads for toothpaste, deodorant and food products. The practice of critically analyzing advertising as a means to support the development of critical thinking skills became popular during the 1960s and 1970s and was influenced by McLuhan's claim that popular culture, advertising, film and television are forms of art akin to literature.[232]

Although the advertising industry in the United States has never supported media literacy initiatives, in Great Britain the industry has been more proactive, in part because of the opportunity provided by the World Health Organization's work in food marketing to children that has positioned media literacy as an alternative to government regulation.[233] When UK candy advertisers supported

[229] Singer, Jerome & Singer, Dorothy (1991). Creating Critical Viewers: A Partnership between Schools and Television Professionals. New York: ABC Television.
[230] Bickham David & Slaby, Ron (2012) Effects of a media literacy program in the US on children's critical evaluation of unhealthy media messages about violence, smoking, and food. *Journal of Children and Media* 6(2), 255-271. See also Primack, Brian, Douglas, Erica, Land, , Miller, Elizabeth, and Fine, Michael (2014). Comparison of media literacy and usual education to prevent tobacco use: A cluster-randomized trial. *Journal of School Health* 84(2), 106 – 115. DOI: 10.1111/josh.12130.

[231] Participant Media (2013). Eyes wide open. [Video.] Available: http://www.participantmedia.com /2013/07/open-eyes-wide-open/
[232] English education professor Louis Forsdale of Columbia University Teachers College invited Marshall McLuhan to speak at a seminar in 1955, a few years after the publication of *The Mechanical Bride* (1951). Levinson, Paul (1999). *Digital McLuhan: A guide to the information millennium*. New York: Routledge.
[233] Buckingham, David (2009). The Impact of the Commercial World on Children's Wellbeing. Available: https://www.academia.edu/679743/The_Impact_of_the_Commercial_World_on_Childrens_ Wellbeing

the development of Media Smart curriculum in the UK in 2002, they enlisted the support of media literacy experts in the creation of the educational resource materials and lessons for children ages 6 to 11. With video clips, teacher notes, and activity sheets, the curriculum used compelling pedagogical methods to introduce children to how advertising works, methods used to persuade children including celebrity appeals, and the function of public service advertising. Independent research with teachers and students revealed that children learned about the concept of target audiences and the intersection between peer culture and brand culture.[234] The success of this initiative encouraged educators to see media literacy as a means of demystifying media by "pulling back the curtain" on how media messages are created and why they have impact on consumers.

TECHNOLOGY: MEDIA LITERACY EXPANDS YOUTH CREATIVITY AND PROMOTES RESPONSIBLE USE

When Internet and technology industries develop media literacy initiatives, they tend to position their work in relation to the power of creative expression or as a means of socializing youth and setting norms about appropriate online behaviors when texting, sharing image files, or interacting on social networks. Some Internet services firms support important, high-visibility work in media literacy education that has had a transformative impact on the lives of underserved children and youth, both across the United States and around the world. For example, Adobe has created Adobe Youth Voices, a philanthropic program which provides grants, computer software and stipends to a variety of youth media and media literacy organizations. The goal of the Adobe program is to give underserved and "at-risk" students access to digital technologies, like Premiere and Photoshop, so that they can educate people about social issues (like violence, sexual health, immigration and health care) in their own communities. Miguel Salinas, the senior manager of Adobe Youth Voices, said his organization wants students to "think critically and do research, and think creatively about how they express their ideas."[235] Thousands of young people in the United States, India and around the world have participated in this program and learned to make short films that address their lived experience and social reality. The visibility of this initiative has positioned media literacy as an outlet for creative expression by children and youth, especially from underserved communities.

Technology firms are also interested in digital and media literacy as a means to minimize the potential risks and harms of Internet use. When the public hears the phrase "children and online safety," they may think about predators, sexting, and some of the more lurid and sensational media stories about the harms and risks that may befall children and youth in the new realms of the Internet and social media spaces. One might expect the online safety community to be dominated by the perspectives of concerned parents and law enforcement officials. But since the mid-2000s, the online safety community has been significantly influenced not by the voices of frustrated and angry parents, but by the interests of Internet and technology industries who seek to reassure citizens that the Internet is a fine place for their children to play, interact and learn.

[234] Buckingham, David and Rebekah Willett, Shakantula Banaji and Sue Cranmer (2007) Media Smart Be Adwise 2: an evaluation. Media Smart, London, UK.

[235] Hager, Emily (2010, June 10). Students turn life experiences into short films. *New York Times.* Available: http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/06/10/teenagers-turn-life-experiences-into-short-films/

The Internet Keep Safe Coalition (iKeepSafe) is a nonprofit international alliance of more than 100 policy leaders, educators, law enforcement members, technology experts, public health experts and advocates. In 2011, iKeepSafe introduced the Google Digital Literacy and Citizenship Curriculum. The program, which targets middle-school students ages 11 – 13, consists of a set of three short animated YouTube videos with lesson plans and handouts.[236] This approach to media literacy is designed to influence students' perception of online behaviors, helping them to be socially appropriate in interactions with people online, and learning how to avoid scams. The learning goals are oriented around increasing knowledge about the tools offered by Google/YouTube to protect oneself from inappropriate content when using the Internet and the importance of making appropriate choices to minimize personal risk. For example, learning goals state that students will understand that not everything they see on the web is true; how to recognize online scams; how to protect themselves from scams; and how to take action if they find themselves being scammed. Vocabulary words include terms like *spyware, phishing, firewall,* and *pop-up contest*. The videos show specific features of YouTube designed to help users identify and address problematic content, including the "flagging" feature and the ability to erase negative comments about one's own posted videos. After viewing the videos, teachers are instructed to review the main ideas presented. Then learners participate in a quiz-assessment activity, where, in one lesson, teachers are encouraged to use the format of the popular television quiz show, "Who Wants to be Millionaire" to engage students in answering comprehension questions about Internet scams. Students can use Lifelines or Phone a Friend when answering these questions.

The curriculum has a focus on increasing awareness, emphasizing the value of being skeptical about information provided on the Internet and about being skeptical of the motives of people who use the Internet for social relationships. The tone of the curriculum conveys a sense of warning about those who use the Internet and positions learners as potential victims who may be taken advantage of. The curriculum explicitly offers a list of "do's and don'ts" – including an admonition to not post private information like addresses or phone numbers or to engage in sexual talk online. In other similar curricula, such as the materials created by Common Sense Media, this framing is often called "digital citizenship," and it explicitly refers a focus on teaching social norms of relational politeness and online safety with a focus on ethics and social responsibility. It's important to note that students are not invited to ask "how" and "why" questions about the Internet and social media. These approaches are about defining normative social behavior, not about providing learners with information to help learners understand how the Internet works, how it is (un)regulated, why scams are so common online, or how consumer protection laws apply to the Internet.

For these reasons, when it comes to online safety, media literacy educators have been ambivalent. In recent years, media literacy educators have focused more on expanding the concept of literacy, analyzing media's role in society, asking critical questions to examine media texts and helping children and young people become multimedia authors as they grow up in a digital world. These discourses of empowerment are not so well-aligned with the mission of online safety and harm reduction, which rely on an ethos of protection. In this arena, scholars with interests in the effects of media on children and youth have been more prominent. It is possible that, in the years to come, media literacy educators will feel increasingly comfortable embracing both empowerment and protection, viewing both perspectives as essential and inseparable dimensions of the work of preparing children and

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[236] Google and iKeepSafe (2010). Google Digital Literacy and Citizenship Curriculum http://www.google.com/goodtoknow/web/curriculum/

young people for life in a technology-rich and media-saturated society.

CONCLUSION

In answering the question, "What does society need from media in the age of digital communication?" one obvious answer is increased support for media literacy education, both in and out of schools. Although the European Commission has invested millions of euros in supporting media literacy education research and practice, in the rest of the world, government support for media literacy has not been forthcoming. For this reason, media literacy educators will inevitably continue to rely on the private sector. The media industry has used a variety of approaches to advance media literacy by creating demand for digital media products and services; providing information about content, structures, or production processes; offering consumer protection or minimizing risks associated with media use; promoting creative self-expression and active participation in media culture; and challenging media industries to address problematic or ethically questionable practices. The media industry's involvement in media literacy is part of a wider cultural trend that is occurring as new forms of education reform by well-intentioned stakeholders who aim to support workforce development goals, build bridges between the classroom and the culture, and encourage people to move from passive spectators to active participants in an increasingly mediated world. In the United States, the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) has acknowledged that media literacy educators "share with media owners, producers, and members of the creative community responsibility for facilitating mutual understanding of the effects of media on individuals and on society" but that media literacy education "does not excuse media

makers from their responsibility as members of the community to make a positive contribution and avoid doing harm."[237] This paper has shown that the diverse and productive approaches taken by media industry leaders to advance media literacy, in partnership with educators and activists, has effectively diminished the once-controversial role of media companies in supporting media literacy education, at least in the eyes of many.

But media industry involvement in the media literacy movement can only do so much. It is not and never can be a substitute for genuinely local, grass-roots initiatives that revolve around the genuine needs of children, families, teachers, schools and libraries. Approaches to media literacy that are supported by the media industry are distinctly different than those supported by public sector education institutions, private individuals, charitable foundations, government agencies, non-profit organizations, and grass-roots community efforts. Nearly all media literacy initiatives supported by the media industry are designed as stand-alone programs that are not in conflict with industry corporate and strategic goals. Grass-roots approaches to media literacy education consist of programs that generally emerge from the diverse talents and initiatives of enthusiast teachers, including local librarians, academics, media artists and non-profit leaders. European media literacy practices showcased by the Evens Foundation reveal the value of such locally-initiated programs that directly address the particular needs of children, young people or young adults in a situation-specific context. For example, a program in a specific Norwegian middle-school enables youth to build critical thinking skills by exploring the historical accuracy of videogames set in historical contexts; youth in one large city in Poland get

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[237] National Association for Media Literacy Education (2010). Core Principles of Media Literacy Education in the United States. http://namle.net/publications/core-principles/, p. 7.

opportunities to discover the power of filmmaking with support from city government and local media makers.[238]

How much does a person need to know about the economics of media industries in order to be media literate? There is considerable debate among scholars and practitioners about the relative value of gaining real-world knowledge about media industries (including their economic and political structure and function).[239] While some educators emphasize the practice of asking critical questions and the inquiry process,[240] others emphasize the use of emotional engagement and persuasion to inspire behavior and attitude change towards the media.[241] And still others see the practice of digital and media literacy as bound up with interpersonal relationships, engagement and social participation.[242] Each of these approaches may be supported by media industry-supported initiatives that aim to reach larger or smaller groups of people.

The media industry has been a key stakeholder in helping children and young people acquired the knowledge and skills they need to navigate in a media-saturated world. Media industry support for media literacy has also contributed to innovative practices in the field. But the history of the U.S. National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) reveals that industry funding of media literacy has been a divisive issue, as American educators who were bitterly divided over the value of media industry involvement contributed to the dissipation of the full potential of a national membership organization.

Still, despite the controversy, within a variety of sectors of news media, broadcasting and cable television, advertising, and the Internet and telecommunications, media industry partners (and philanthropic organizations associated with the media industry) have created high-visibility media literacy initiatives that have provided knowledge about how media work, even at a time when these industries are under distinctive competitive market forces and are rapidly changing. For example, the McCormick Foundation, with more than $1 billion in assets from the legacy of the *Chicago Tribune* publisher, has supported a variety of media literacy initiatives that introduce Chicago-area children and young people to the power of news media literacy. Because such programs have supported people's capacity for critical thinking, collaboration, creative self-expression and active participation in media culture, media companies may be seen as contributing to the public good.

However, it must be recognized that many media and technology companies seek to enter schools and speak to students, teachers and parents with goals that are more directly aligned with marketing objectives than with educational or social aims. In 2013, technology companies like Pearson, a global information services company which owns news magazines like *The Economist*, spent $9 billion on improving its technology in education services and News Corporation has invested heavily in Amplify, a company which develops games for learning.[243] Today, media and technology industries view education not as a philanthropy, but as a significant part of their core market, as witnessed by the scale of the trade shows at the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) or the American Library Association (ALA). Of course, media and technology companies are an essential part of

[238] Evens Foundation (2013). Media Literacy in Europe: Twelve Good Practices that Will Inspire You. Retrieved April 1, 2015 from http://issuu.com/joadriaens/docs/medialiteracymagazine#
[239] Potter, James W. (2004). *Theory of media literacy: A cognitive approach.* Thousand Oaks: Sage.
[240] Hobbs, Renee (2012). *Digital and media literacy: Connecting culture and classroom.* Thousand Oaks: Corwin/Sage.
[241] Scharrer, Erica (2012). 'I noticed more violence…' The effect of a media literacy program on critical attitudes towards media violence. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 22(1), 69 – 86.
[242] Jenkins, Henry (2006). Confronting the challenges of participatory culture: Media education for the 21st century. John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Available: http://mitpress.mit.edu/sites/default/files/titles/free_download/9780262513623_Confronting_the_Challenges.pdf.

[243] The Economist. (2013, June 29). Catching on at last. http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21580136-new-technology-poised-disrupt-americas-schools-and-then-worlds-catching-last

the larger shift in American education policy. But media industries can choose whether to support initiatives that activate teacher professionalism through providing meaningful professional development, rely on consultants or media professionals to do the teaching, or enact "scripted classrooms" where teachers merely execute the creative ideas of others. Fortunately, as this paper has shown, the motives and values of media and technology companies are not monolithic; there are important differences between the educational values, products and services provided by media companies like Discovery, Pearson, Comcast and the *New York Times* or technology companies like HP, Apple and Microsoft.

In the future, media industry stakeholders may even be able to address some newly emerging and significant gaps in public understanding in advancing media literacy for children, youth and families. One major unexplored issue concerns big data, surveillance and privacy. Today, every device we own generates data that are used by companies to improve their sales; the rise of data warehouses have enabled companies to gather information about our airline flights, job applications, insurance plans, credit card usage and GPS locations. Most people, young and old, are unaware of how the information they provide becomes commodified. The rise of digital marketing and big data represent significant shifts in the relationship between the audience, author, media industry, and advertiser, but there have been few efforts to explain these shifts to ordinary citizens.[244] This is a ripe topic for digital and media literacy education and the media industry has an important role to play in addressing the new transparency gap, as Henry Jenkins has called it.[245]

The media industry's longstanding involvement in media literacy education is a significant, noteworthy and understudied feature of the field. Some characteristics of media industry involvement in media literacy education have been remarkably stable over decades. Media companies partner with media literacy experts, non-profit organizations, and government agencies to gain visibility for their good citizenship efforts. This enables them to be featured as one of the "white hats" helping to address some contemporary social problem or issue related to media and technology's role in society.

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[244] Turow, Joseph (2012). *The daily you: How the new advertising industry is defining your identity and your worth.* New Haven CT: Yale University Press.
[245] Jenkins, Henry (2006). Confronting the challenges of participatory culture: Media education for the 21st century. Available: http://mitpress.mit.edu/sites/default/files/titles/free_download/9780262513623_Confronting_the_Challenges.pdf