

In This Issue...

Theme: Libraries, Museums and Informal Learning **02**

In this issue, we discuss the significance of museums and libraries as venues for both informal and lifelong learning, and illuminate the role that media literacy is playing in the changing learning environment of the 21st century.

Research Highlights **03**

In this section, we consider the new strategies that libraries and museums are using to bridge the divide between formal and informal learning.

We also review a new report by the Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop on the digital media habits of young children.

CML News **07**

A new book on media literacy and social networking features CML's Five Core Concepts and Key Questions as a foundation for media literacy education

Media Literacy Resources **09**

Rapid changes in the field of library and museum services are generating a substantial body of literature for researchers and practitioners alike.

Med!aLit Moments **11**

Do your students like mystery? Intrigue? Pulp fiction? In this MediaLit Moment, they become literary detectives looking for narrative clues in a set of comic book panels.

Theme: Libraries, Museums and Informal Learning

In summer 2009, YOUmedia opened its doors at the Harold Washington Library Center in downtown Chicago. Funded by the MacArthur and Pearson Foundations and realized from plans by a team of designers at Carnegie Mellon University, Chicago Scenic Studios and the Institute of Play in New York, this 5,500 square foot teen learning center is equipped with over 100 laptops, video games, a small recording studio, a performance space, and a variety of digital media creation tools and software. In addition, the space is stocked with thousands of books, including young adult titles and books on local and world history.

YOUmedia also provides an inviting informal learning space for teens. Students can snack and chat with friends, tinker with games and music, or head to the “geek-out” area where they can hone their digital media skills alone, with peers, or with the help of adult mentors.

YOUmedia encourages teens to learn media literacy skills, along with other 21st century skills such as creativity, communication and critical thinking. For example, each month YOUmedia students are invited to participate in the One Chicago, One Book city-wide book club. The current selection, Neil Gaiman’s *Neverwhere*, takes place in contemporary London and the haunting and fantastic world of “London Below.” Among other choices suggested by the book club, YOUmedia students can produce a video/photo documentary of above-ground Chicago and the Chicago subway, and explain how their work reflects or comments on themes from the novel.

By fall 2010, one hundred teens were coming through YOUmedia each day, and librarians noticed a ten-fold increase in circulation of teen titles from the library (Ito, “When Youth Own the Public Education Agenda,” Huffington Post, November 24, 2010). In September, the MacArthur Foundation and the Institute of Museum and Library Services launched a competition to create 30 new youth learning labs in libraries and museums across the country, including \$4 million in funding for planning grants.

In this issue of Connections, we focus on the network of informal learning institutions, particularly museums and libraries, through which media literacy learning often takes place and we examine the evolution of these institutions in a digital world, illuminating the learning opportunities which these developments make possible. We discuss new research from the Joan Ganz Cooney on the digital lives of young children, and review a new book on media literacy and social networking which uses CML’s Five Core Concepts and Key Questions to define the field of media literacy education and make sure to check out our MediaLit Moment, which shows how even comic books can be used to conduct serious analysis of audience participation in media narratives.

Research Highlights

Libraries, Museums and Informal Learning

Out of the 168 hours in each week, how many do high school students spend in class or doing schoolwork? Let's say 6 hours a day plus 2 hours of homework, for a total of 40 hours. Next, add time for sleeping, grooming and commuting. Let's say that's 10 hours each day for a total of 70 hours each week. Our total so far is 110 hours. Depending on their passions or their moods, these students might spend the remaining 58 hours playing sports, texting friends, playing Rock Band, participating in afterschool language clubs, taking music lessons, blogging, and more. If one defines learning as acquiring any kind of knowledge, understanding or skill, many young people are engaging in at least as much informal learning as they do formal learning.

A growing body of research, including research from the Harvard Family Research Project, is providing evidence that goal-directed free-time activity in safe, supportive environments with responsive adults and peers make sizable contributions to learning, social skills and mental health (Wolf, "Outside the Box," *Cable in the Classroom Threshold* magazine, Winter 2008, p. 10). The National Educational Technology Plan published in November 2010 makes two other research-based arguments about informal learning: that most learning takes place outside of school, and that lifelong learning is becoming the norm in an economy in which most workers are likely to change jobs several times over the course of their careers (Section, "Learning: Engage and Empower").

Libraries and museums are essential to this movement towards lifelong learning. These are the "third places" where much informal learning takes place. Neither work nor home, they are safe and neutral community spaces where people come together voluntarily and informally in ways that level social inequities and promote community engagement and social connection. (Institute of Museum and Library Services, "The Future of Museums and Libraries," 2009, p. 9-10).

The YOUmedia center at the downtown Chicago Public Library is a good case in point. (Read our theme article to learn more about YOUmedia's innovative blending of digital media production and literacy practices). High school teens from across the Chicago metro area visit YOUmedia, and students and mentors who staff the center interact with each other in ways that reflect the center's status as a third place. Charlotte Giese, a YOUmedia patron who attends Jones College Prep downtown, remarks, "I've met a couple of the mentors. They ask you why you're here, and, are you interested in anything? . . . The people who come here come up to the mentors to get answers to questions they have. . . . A lot of people make friends with the mentors, too. To them, they're another person who's a friend."

One significant implication of the 21st century shift towards lifelong and informal learning is that single institutions, especially schools, can no longer be the sole source of learning. The social and economic currents responsible for this shift seem to be carrying libraries and

museums towards a historic juncture where collaboration is both a necessity and an opportunity. As content is increasingly available digitally and budgets shrink, libraries, museums and other cultural organizations seek out strategic partnerships, and they frequently turn to new media and communications technologies to help make them possible. As institutions gain experience with forming partnerships, they may discover new ways of generating learning opportunities across the entire field of contexts, activities, resources and people which make up the networks created by these partnerships.

Libraries and museums are in process of redefining their missions – from providing access to content, to helping assist in content organization, management and distribution access, while providing training to their constituents on how media operates as a system of production/construction. Access to content is plentiful, while the process skills of media literacy have yet to be embedded in systems for teaching and learning. There is a unique opportunity for libraries and museums to partner with schools on providing access to content knowledge through teaching the skills of media literacy. This approach goes beyond limiting access of knowledge to silos and physical spaces, and to helping citizens explore and make meaning of content from a myriad of sources.

In 2008, when the Brooklyn Museum decided to join the Flickr Commons, a special area within Flickr where cultural institutions can share photos from their collections, museum staff created a special Flickr Commons Group for the museum. Group members discussed history, posed questions, engaged in debate, and carried out research. One member who was inspired by the museum's images of the 1893 Chicago World Columbian Exposition conducted extensive research on the topic, and later museum staff consulted him when they were unable to answer a research query (Institute of Museum and Library Services, "WebWise: Digital Debates," conference proceedings, February 2009, p. 15).

The networks that develop are very likely to enhance media literacy skills which build on earlier, foundational skills taught by media literacy educators. In "Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century" (MacArthur Foundation, 2007), Henry Jenkins and his colleagues identify a number of "new media literacy" skills. Two of these are especially relevant to our discussion of informal learning and networked partnerships: play, defined as "the capacity to experiment with one's surroundings as a form of problem-solving," and collective intelligence, defined as "the ability to pool knowledge and compare notes with others towards a common goal" (p.4.). Today, many libraries are experimenting with creating collections of Japanese manga and graphic novels to encourage teens to engage in print and visual literacy practice, and are discovering that drawing young fans to these collections can help library staff "tap" into the highly motivated literacy practices of fan communities online and off (Jenkins et al, p. 9, and Brehm-Heeger, Conway and Vale, *Young Adult Library Services*, Winter 2007, 14-16). In the future, museums and libraries are likely to capitalize on the new media literacy practices of visitors, and to expand the physical and virtual networks which can support them.

Joan Ganz Cooney Center Releases Report on Media Use by Young Children

Last month, the Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop released a new report on the media use of children. “Always Connected: The New Digital Media Habits of Young Children,” synthesizes the findings of several studies conducted from 2006 to 2010, including four “media utilization” studies by the Sesame Workshop, and studies by the Department of Education, Nielsen Research, and the Kaiser Family Foundation. The research team for this report focused on analysis of data for children aged 0 to 11.

The Cooney Center report heightens reader interest in its findings with several vignettes which illustrate how young children today engage with media in their everyday lives. These are based on the lives of real children interviewed and observed by Cooney Center researchers in 2008 and 2009 (all names given are pseudonyms).

One of the key findings of the report affirms that overall patterns of media use by young children reflect that of their older counterparts. “Not only do they have access to increasing types of media, they consume more electronic media than ever before. Use of virtually every type of digital media has increased over the past decade” (p.16). Generally, digital media use increases steadily with age.

The report indicates that television is the dominant medium for young children. “On a typical day, almost 9 out of 10 children over age 5 watch television, compared with slightly more than half of children who play video games or use the Internet” (p. 19). Typically, children spend three hours each day in front of a television set.

By the same token, the report finds that young children like their media to move with them. The proportion of children with their own cell phones has doubled since 2005. Ownership of handheld video games appears to be increasing, and the use of portable digital music players such as iPods and other MP3 players has increased fivefold among children 8 to 10, from 12% to 60% (p. 32-33).

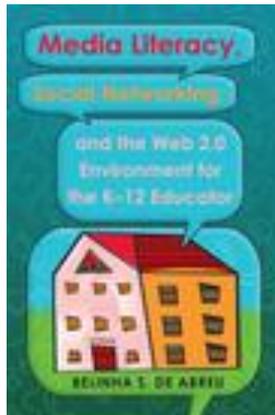
One phenomenon puzzling Cooney Center researchers is the equal or greater consumption of media by lower-income, black and Hispanic children compared to children from white and middle class backgrounds. Rates of video game system ownership, especially for handheld devices, appear to be largely equal in all families earning more than \$25,000 per year. Black and Hispanic children watch more TV than their white counterparts, and are accessing more content across all platforms, such as the Internet, digital media players, and cell phones (p. 25, 27). The authors of the report cite theories by a number of researchers to explain these findings, including fewer safe play spaces in lower-income neighborhoods and limited access to extracurricular activities. One more complex theory deals with media and parenting choices among lower class families (p.27).

Another key finding of the report is that children begin to extend their media habits deeper

into the digital realm between the ages of 7 and 9. The authors of the report give several developmental explanations for these changes, including the ‘fit’ between the social capacities of digital media and the growing capacity of children 8 and older to form complex relationships outside the family (p.30).

Some of the most interesting research in this report is contained in its “Recommendations” section. Cooney Center researchers found that “. . .well over half of parents say they most like reading books with their children, while another third report most enjoying video or TV with their kids. Opportunities such as playing console video games or using the Internet garner meager enthusiasm” (p. 37). The report authors suggest that print and TV provide long-established opportunities for parents and children to learn together, while the digital media most widely used by children are not necessarily designed to support shared interaction. They ask, “What if video-game play and other mobile media such as smart phones were intentionally designed for intergenerational play?” The Cooney Center, USC Game Innovation Lab and other children’s research organizations are currently designing research to find an answer.

The “Always Connected” report is available for download on the Research and Initiatives section of the Cooney Center website at: <http://www.joanganzcooneycenter.org/Research-Initiatives.html>



CML Framework Featured in New Book on Media Literacy

Belinha De Abreu, who made an appearance in the news section of our last issue for her Portuguese translation of *Literacy for the 21st Century*, has just published a new book, *Media Literacy, Social Networking and the Web 2.0 Environment for the K-12 Educator*. In this book, De Abreu engages in a thoughtful discussion of the premises of media literacy education which reveals the value of social networking, the participatory culture of teens and Web 2.0 tools for K-12 schools.

In her introductory chapter, De Abreu defines media literacy and discusses the use of the Five Core Concepts and Key Questions as a standard for media literacy education. Next, she uses current scholarship on critical thinking and critical literacy to demonstrate how young readers of media texts can move from passivity to empowerment, and how critical media literacy principles can be applied to collaborative media production projects, including production through Web 2.0 platforms and tools. In subsequent chapters, she gives a vivid portrait of the participatory media culture which teens inhabit, identifies the learning opportunities which exist within that culture, asserts the need for inclusion of social media in the K-12 curriculum, and defends the argument by asking adult readers to consider their potential role as guides and facilitators of learning within the 'connected' world of teens. In addition, De Abreu showcases a wide variety of Web 2.0 tools and demonstrates their applications for learning across the disciplines (The demonstration is continued in the "Resources and Tools" appendix).

De Abreu not only brings the discipline of a scholar and an activist's finely tuned sense of

	<p>justice to this book, she displays an educator's delight in opportunities for learning. De Abreu's final chapter is titled "Cyber Society," and her treatment of cyber safety and ethics is complemented by a discussion of media literacy learning in a global society.</p> <p><i>Media Literacy, Social Networking and the Web 2.0 Environment for the K-12 Educator</i> is published by Peter Lang publishers, and may be purchased online at http://www.peterlang.com Make sure to search for this title on the Peter Lang USA site. This book is also available for purchase at Amazon.com.</p>
<p>CONSORTIUM for MEDIA LITERACY</p> <hr/> <p><i>Uniting for Development</i></p>	<p>About Us...</p> <p>The Consortium for Media Literacy addresses the role of global media through the advocacy, research and design of media literacy education for youth, educators and parents.</p> <p>The Consortium focuses on K-12 grade youth and their parents and communities. The research efforts include nutrition and health education, body image/sexuality, safety and responsibility in media by consumers and creators of products. The Consortium is building a body of research, interventions and communication that demonstrate scientifically that media literacy is an effective intervention strategy in addressing critical issues for youth.</p> <p>www.ConsortiumforMediaLiteracy.org</p>

Media Literacy Resources

Teaching Tip: Media librarians can be a teacher's best friend when it comes to media production projects. Enlist the help of your school or community librarian, and work together to make media literacy projects meaningful and fun for your students.

Libraries, Museums and Informal Learning

Institute of Museum and Library Services (<http://www.ims.gov>)

In the last decade, dwindling funds and the expanding leisure options available to the public (including the explosion of social media) have challenged museums and libraries to find ways of making themselves relevant, sustainable and responsive to the communities which they serve. The resources section of the IMLS site offers many interesting publications, including *Nine to Nineteen: Youth in Museums and Libraries: A Practitioner's Guide* (2009).

The MacArthur Foundation (<http://www.macfound.org>)

Since its inception in 2006, the MacArthur Foundation's Digital Media and Learning Initiative has been a continuing source of current scholarship and successful programming and advocacy on issues involving digital media and 21st century learning. For example, research from their 2008 report *Hanging Out, Messing Around and Geeking Out: Kids Living and Learning with New Media* was used as a conceptual framework for designing the YOUmedia teen space at the Chicago Public Library. Recent contributions include *Digital Media and Technology in Afterschool Programs, Libraries, and Museums*, and a PBS documentary on 21st century learners funded in part by the foundation.

Harvard Family Research Project (<http://www.hfrp.org>)

HFRP has been helping stakeholders develop and evaluate strategies for promoting the well being of youth, families and communities since 1983. Complementary Learning and Out-of-School Time are two of their primary research areas.

Association of Science-Technology Centers (<http://www.astc.org>)

According to Alan Friedman, former director the New York Hall of Science, most in-service trainings for science teachers take place not at universities but at science centers (Cable in the Classroom, *Threshold* magazine, Winter 2008). ASTC is one of the major international organizations promoting best practices and professional development in the field.

Stephen E. Weil, *Making Museums Matter*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002.

Weil's book is witty, imaginative and erudite, and he asks many clear-eyed questions about the value of museums before larger institutions were forced to deal with questions of survival in the wake of the 2008 recession. Don't miss the "Fantasy Islands" chapter, a thought experiment that helps readers consider what makes museums valuable to them.

James Irvine Foundation (2005) *Museums After School: How Museums Are Reaching Kids, Partnering with Schools, and Making a Difference* (<http://irvine.org/publications/publications-by-topic/archive>)

The James Irvine Foundation's Museum Youth Initiative (MYI) was a four-year program that sought to strengthen the ability of California museums to educate young people during out-of-school hours and enhance the roles of museums as educational resources that contribute to improved academic achievement. The foundation's 2005 final report, "Museums After School," provides information on the outcomes of the initiative, and lessons learned by the participating schools and museums.

MediaLit Moments

How Comics Ask You to Tell the Story

Though it might seem like a “lazy” medium to some, comic books and graphic novels do make cognitive demands on the reader. The reader’s construction of narrative sequence is a good case in point. The illustrated panels in a comic book are completely separate from one another. The text or dialogue in each panel gives the reader clues about the likely sequence in which panels should be read. Illustrations which indicate action or a change of scene can also give the reader visual cues. But all readers of comic books and graphic novels make a small leap of faith each time they take their eyes off of one panel and move them to another. In effect, it’s the reader who turns the pictures into a story.

In this MediaLit Moment, your students will get to experience the challenge of constructing narrative sequences in comic books. They’ll have a chance to take a closer look at the textual and visual cues which help the reader construct a storyline, and they may even discover that their friends “see” the story differently than they do.

Scramble several comic book panels and ask students to guess the original sequence

AHA!: There’s a lot more to making a story with pictures than I ever imagined!

Key Question #2: What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?

Core Concept #2: Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules

Key Question #3: How might different people understand this message differently?

Core Concept #3: Different people experience the same media message differently

Grade Level: 6-8

Materials: Sequence of comic book panels, black and white copier, scissors

For this lesson, we’ve selected the opening panels from Jason Lutes’ *Berlin: City of Stones* (Montreal: Drawn and Quarterly, 2001), the first of three graphic novels set in Berlin between the world wars. In this sequence, two of the main characters meet while travelling on a train to Berlin. Print the strip of panels, make copies, then cut each strip into individual panels. See pages 13-14.

Activity: Distribute “packets” of cut-up strips to your students and explain what you’ve done with them. Ask them to decide how the panels originally fit together. When students have made their best guesses and are ready to discuss them, ask them to give you their reasoning. What “clued them in” to the sequence that they’ve chosen? If students have come up with different sequences, make sure to let them know that it’s natural for different people to

experience the same media message differently—there isn't necessarily a "right" answer. Ask what led to these differing interpretations. You may also want to put the different sequences up for a class vote.

Extended Activity: If you feel that your students identified the original sequence of panels too easily, we have another, more challenging sequence available. In this story, the main character, Isabel, travels to Mexico in an effort to escape the guilt she feels over her failures in life. In this wordless sequence, she encounters a strange black-clad man who may or may not be real. As you might guess, this sequence is less plot-driven, and has more to do with the character's state of mind. Question #3 is likely to become the primary question as your class works with this sequence. Students may even come away believing that the sequence they chose is better than the original!

The activity suggestion for this sequence is from Rocco Versaci's " 'Literary Literacy' and the Role of the Comic Book: Or, 'You Teach a Class on *What?*' " from *Teaching Visual Literacy*, Nancy Frey and Douglas Fisher, editors. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2008.

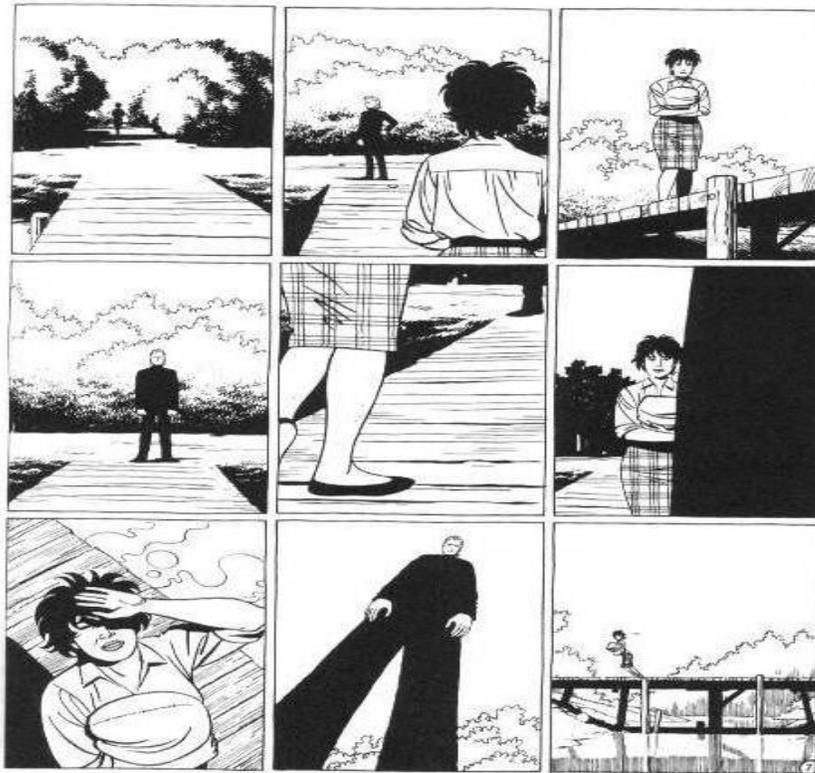
Here's the comic book story in which the sequence appears: Jaime Hernandez, "Flies on the Ceiling," from *Flies on the Ceiling: Volume Nine of the Complete Love and Rockets*, pps. 1-15, Seattle: Fantagraphics, 1991.

The Five Core Concepts and Five Key Questions of media literacy were developed as part of the Center for Media Literacy's MediaLit Kit™ and Questions/TIPS (Q/TIPS)™ framework. Used with permission, © 2002-2011, Center for Media Literacy, <http://www.medialit.com>



5





Panels from Jason Lutes' *Berlin: City of Stones* (Montreal: Drawn and Quarterly, 2001).