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Theme: Maps and Media Literacy

How Will You See The World?

In an episode of Aaron Sorkin's popular television series "The West Wing," the Organization of Cartographers for Social Equality is given access to White House Press Secretary CJ Cregg, and members of the organization display a map which gives equal area to all continents of the world. Dr. Fallow, the leader of the organization, asserts with missionary zeal that President Bartlett must endorse this map because the Mercator map used in most schools actually diminishes the size of developing nations in the tropics. CJ seems relatively unimpressed. When Dr. Fallow displays another equal area map with the south oriented at the top, he begins to explain that this map will also correct hundreds of years of hemispheric hegemony. CJ quickly moves from bemused impatience to exasperation: "You can't do that!" Dr. Fallow: "Why not?" CJ: "Because you're freaking me out!"

Why is CJ freaking out? Though alternatives to the Mercator projection for world maps do exist, most resemble the Mercator in important ways, and north is oriented at the top of virtually all of them. The Mercator maps and the many "compromise" maps to the Mercator distributed by established publishers such as National Geographic and Rand McNally have captured our "mind share" when we think of the phrase "map of the world." We see them in school rooms, in post offices, on the covers of language programs, on television news sets. In this issue, you'll learn how to think "inside" maps in order to gain a better understanding of how they function as media.

You'll find a review of *Seeing Through Maps: Many Ways to See the World*. This book makes a historical journey through the development of a wide array of map projections and map types to help the reader recognize how maps reflect back to us our perceptions of the world. You'll also find resources that you can use in the classroom or at home, from maps of Israel and Palestine that encourage students to recognize differing points of view, to maps that help readers understand the complex working of the global food system. And the MediaLit Moment for this issue gives elementary level students an opportunity to create city maps which other members of your home community may be very interested in seeing. Regardless of the topics that interest you or the subject areas you teach, this issue will help you find a map that meets your needs, or help you start the design process for making one of your own.

Research Highlights

What Do You Want Out of a Map, and What Does a Map Want Out of You?

Is there a single map of the world we should be using? According to Denis Wood, Ward Kaiser and Bob Abramms, authors of the book *Seeing Through Maps: Many Ways of Seeing the World*, the answer is a resounding “No!” They argue that all maps fulfill one or more specific purposes, and throughout the book the authors invite readers to become familiar with the range of purposes which maps serve so that they can choose maps which meet their own needs.

The authors are quick to point out that Gerardus Mercator never intended the transatlantic map that he published in 1569 to be used as a political map of the world. Mercator was most interested in creating regional maps for navigation. Any straight line drawn on his maps were lines of constant compass bearing. Centuries later, statesmen, administrators and teachers were using the Mercator map, which places the equator nearly two thirds of the way towards its southern edge, to emphasize the colonial accomplishments of Europe and the historical importance of Westward expansion.

Equal area maps have been in circulation since 1772, but never drew widespread attention until 1974, when Arno Peters, a German historian, created an equal area projection for his own purposes--to illustrate his argument that a post-colonial world deserved a more equitable map. Peters was able to enlist the support of Oxford cartographers (www.oxfordcartographers.com) to help translate and publish his map in 1982, and the map rapidly gained a sympathetic audience.

A later chapter in the book may stimulate your creativity in planning assignments which make use of maps. Minard's map of Napoleon's failed Russian campaign of 1812-1813 is a map with measurable distances, but is also a timeline, a temperature chart, and a population density chart with the dimensions of a map. The cartograms in this chapter creatively sculpt the world by making the size of nations proportional to some characteristic such as population or carbon dioxide emissions.

In the last chapter, the authors argue that maps are essentially extensions of their makers. Maps act like “teachers, or guidance counselors, or lawyers, or advisors, or cops” (110). For example, a zoning map “tells” us where we can't do something. A school district attendance map “tells” us that we must do something. And the ultimate purpose of maps, according to the authors, is to persuade us of their authority. They not only affirm that certain places exist, but that the things they tell us *about* those places are true.

Accessible and engaging, *Seeing Through Maps* amply demonstrates how maps function as media. Like all media, maps give us many ways of seeing the world.

Seeing Through Maps is published by ODT, Incorporated, and is available at special discounts for educational use.

Contact ODT, Inc. at: PO Box 134, Amherst, MA 01004
1-800-736-1293 www.ODTmaps.com

National Council for Social Studies Releases Media Literacy Statement

In February, the National Council for the Social Studies issued a position statement which argued that media literacy plays a critical role in the social studies curriculum. In their opening statement, the task force comments on the media saturated environment in which children now live. Reflecting on the implications of this state of affairs, the task force comes to the conclusion that key skills taught by social studies teachers, such as the ability to differentiate between fact and fiction, “are now intimately connected to the ability to analyze and create media.”

In arguing for the need to integrate media literacy objectives into social studies curricula, the authors highlight the role of media as powerful teachers in today’s society, and assert that the concentration of media outlets within a few transnational corporations creates a situation in which a small group of wealthy individuals have “tremendous power to decide who and what will be represented and what lessons will be taught.” The task force responds to this need with pedagogy of empowerment, in which social studies teachers prepare students to critically participate in today’s media culture “as active citizens with the abilities to intelligently and compassionately shape democracy in this new millennium.”

The task force asserts that “legitimate” teaching texts should include the full range of media, from advertising to video games, text messages, and maps; and also promotes the benefits of teaching media construction skills, noting that students’ appetite for social media presents an opportunity for linking participatory media literacy with civic education. Sample media literacy activities in the social studies classroom include comparing and contrasting the benefits and limitations of different types of maps before students create their own; and producing a video about the school community which features original interviews and is shared online.

In closing, the task force statement focuses on media literacy instruction as a means for deepening students’ questioning of the relationships between “information, knowledge and power.” The task force offers a number of questions for exploration which may sound familiar to readers who have taught media literacy skills. For example, Question 4 asks, “Whose perspective, values and ideology are represented, and whose are missing?” Without question, this position statement from the Council introduces social studies teachers to a powerful array of instructional tools for use in their classrooms.

Media Literacy in Action:
an interview with teacher
Alan Scher,
San Francisco, CA.

After School Media Literacy Program Stokes Imagination of Students

In June, Alan Scher, an MA candidate in Education at Sonoma State University, completed teaching an after school program in San Francisco that utilized lessons from the CML MediaLit Kit™.

Scher, who is a graduate of the USC School of Cinema, opted for the field of education after working in the film industry for six years. He moved to Sonoma County, and spent four years managing after school programs with the Napa County Office of Education's CalSERVES program. Through this experience, Scher discovered his passion for creating programming, especially in the arts, and he decided to enroll in Sonoma State's MA program in Education with an emphasis in Curriculum, Teaching and Learning.

In his studies, Scher read works by Doug Kellner and Jeff Share, whose theories of "critical media literacy" offered a social justice framework for education in the arts. Scher was inspired, but wanted to know what these principles "looked like" in action. When he learned that Share had co-authored lessons for the Center for Media Literacy, he examined lessons in the MediaLit Kit and decided to try five of them out in the classroom.

Scher was especially interested in documenting how the lessons would be received by students. Says Scher, "The case studies in the CML archive--and many case studies in general--say that a curriculum does this or that for the kids, but what do the kids think it does for them?"

Scher moved to San Francisco and found work at a community center known for its innovative programming. When he managed to coordinate a media literacy class at the center, he found that the students were potentially a tough crowd. These were top tier students in their own schools who needed to be continually challenged. Their response exceeded expectations. At the end of each lesson, Scher says, students "wanted more opportunity to do this, dig in deeper, watch more, talk more, make more." In Scher's words, students were not only engaged but "on fire" during the media production lessons.

	<p>Scher also noticed that students' critical thinking skills were stimulated over the course of the lessons. In reflecting on a lesson about camera angles, Scher says, "It was really amazing to see the their progression from unconsciously accepting visual imagery --like the 'hero shot,' for instance-- to their being able to question why a particular camera trick was chosen. It's the peeling back of the veil that Paulo Freire writes about, empowering these young people to step back and question the way they interpret the world around them."</p>
<p>Med!aLit moments</p>	<p>Introducing MediaLit Moments MediaLit Moments are classroom activities that provide teachable 'AHA' moments to illustrate one of the <i>Five Key Questions</i> for media literacy. Designed for ease of use, lessons require limited preparation and are easily downloadable.</p> <p>This month's MediaLit Moment: <i>What's in a Map?</i> (see page 9).</p>
<p>CONSORTIUM for MEDIA LITERACY</p> <hr/> <p><i>Uniting for Development</i></p>	<p>About Us... 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>http://www.ConsortiumforMediaLiteracy.org</p>

Media Literacy Resources

Teaching Tip: Since your students will have different levels of exposure to and knowledge of media, review a list of guidelines or ‘norms’ before introducing media literacy lessons.

Suggested norms can include:

- Be respectful of one another and the ideas shared
- Listen to understand
- Be open to new ideas
- Do not share inappropriate personal stories
- Actively participate!

Maps for Learning, Learning About Maps

ODT is the North American publisher of the Peters projection map, and also publishes a variety of world maps (<http://www.ODTmaps.com>). When you order from their web site (or over the phone) use the coupon code of “CONNECTIONS” to save \$3 on your order and also get a free set of map postcards.

DVD, “Many Ways to See the World.” This DVD is an entertaining, engaging and well-organized 30 minute tour of many of the map images discussed in the book. Bonus features include power point images and links to various map resources, including the web site for New Internationalist Magazine (<http://www.newint.org>), the original British publisher of the Peters map.

DVD, “Arno Peters: Radical Map, Remarkable Man.” This 30 minute DVD tells the story of Arno Peters’ scholarly career and his passion for creating a world map that would promote social equality. It also chronicles the map’s first English language publication through several interviews with British and American publishers, and follows the wide variety of reactions the map received.

Links to teaching resources are also embedded in the Peters DVD, including elementary curricula from Oxfam Education (<http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education>) and lessons from World Bridger Media (<http://worldbridgermedia.com/index.shtml>) appropriate for high school or introductory college courses.

The Penguin Atlas of Women in the World (2008), by Joni Seager. In 1993, Joni Seager wrote her groundbreaking *Earth Follies: Coming to Feminist Terms with the Global Environmental Crisis*. Now in its fourth edition, this atlas provides comprehensive and accessible analysis of global data on key issues facing women today. Published by Penguin Books (<http://www.penguin.com>)

The Atlas of Food: Who Eats What, Where, and Why (2008), by Erik Millstone. Now in its second edition, this book features forty maps arranged in several sections covering issues such as contamination of food and water, overnutrition, micronutrient deficiency, processing, farming, and trade. Published by University of California Press (<http://www.ucpress.edu>)

Project Look Sharp (<http://www.ithaca.edu/looksharp>) produces media-rich curricula for secondary and college students covering specific topics in the social and environmental sciences.

Teacher's Discovery (<http://www.teachersdiscovery.com>) produces supplemental teaching materials, and their Exploration Company brand distributes a variety of interactive e-maps.

Open Street Maps (<http://www.openstreetmap.org>) is an innovative collaborative mapmaking "wiki" hosted by the Virtual Reality Centre for the Built Environment at University College London. Full participation in the site requires a GPS device, but the wiki provides a base map, a substantial array of tutorials, and access to several software tools.

Media Education Foundation Releases New Film on Libraries and Librarianship

Ann Seidl's "The Hollywood Librarian: A Look at Librarians Through Film" is more than a film intended to counter the cinematic stereotype of the fussy, old-maid librarian with pencil in bun, though it must be admitted that Seidl did find some screen gems. Elizabeth Taylor is captivating in "Cleopatra" as she skewers Julius Caesar (Rex Harrison) for the destruction of the library of Alexandria: "Neither you nor anyone else has the right to destroy one human thought!" Librarian Sasha von Scherler is a slacker's nightmare as she teaches Parker Posey some lessons about library science in "Party Girl."

But the bulk of Seidl's film builds the argument that librarians play a vital role in society and should not be taken for granted. An interview with Jan Neal, a librarian campaigning against the closure of libraries in Salinas, California, may be one of the most telling of the film: "They're talking to you and expressing how upset they are or asking you, 'Is this true? Are libraries really going to close?' Or, 'I know the libraries aren't going to really close. That's not gonna happen.' And you're the only person they can tell that to."

Hewlett Packard librarian Eugenie Prime reminds viewers of the importance of librarians as teachers of information literacy skills: "We help people define what their information need is. . . . We have a way of getting people to share with us what that problem is and then are able to package the answer in a way that they would want. Google can't meet that, no way."

But librarians also do many other things, and it's in this respect that they take on a much larger role in society. They help inmates at San Quentin prison coach other inmates as they learn to read. At their home libraries, they teach adult literacy and ESL classes. One public school librarian in Denver has an eye for identifying students with special needs. One librarian in Long Beach, California helps to organize the first cultural festival for the largest Cambodian community outside of Cambodia.

Above all, librarians encourage people to appreciate their own intellectual capabilities. Jamie Lerue, a county library director in Colorado, recounts how a difficult childhood led to his interest in libraries: "My father would tell me, 'you're stupid, you're stupid.' When I found the library, what I heard was a place where when you asked a question, they went, 'What a good question. Let's find out, and let's dig in and find these answers.'"

Last year, the American Association of School Librarians issued a set of learning standards for 21st century learners. The third standard in the framework states that students will "Share knowledge and participate ethically and productively as members of our democratic society."

This "Hollywood Librarian" does much more than entertain. It offers a fresh, thought-provoking discussion of librarians and librarianship suitable for a wide variety of viewers.

Med!aLit Moments

What's in a Map?

As the authors make clear in *Seeing Through Maps* (reviewed this issue), people who read maps are audiences, and maps usually have something to “say” to their readers. For example, a tourist map that shows the locations of downtown businesses says “Shop downtown!” But how often do people get to read a map that says something they want to hear about themselves or their community? In this MediaLit Moment, your students will have the chance to create a map that expresses their feelings about the community in which they live, as well as their thoughts about the things in their community that they might like to see change.

Have your students create a “current use” map of their community

AHA! In this map, I’m not just telling people where places are, I’m also telling them about my community!

Key Question #4 for Producers: Have I clearly and consistently framed values, lifestyles and points of view in my content?

Core Concept #4: Media have embedded values and points of view

Grade: 4+

Materials: colored markers (we suggest red and blue), and a base map to distribute to students. The choice of area for the base map depends on your location and the demographics of your student population. If your school is in a rural location, you may need a map which focuses on a county-wide area. If your school is located in an urban area, then your map should focus on one or more neighborhoods. If your students commute from long distances, you may want to make the school the focal point of your map.

Because the map that your students make will include the public places they go on a daily basis, you should use a base map which gives students a frame of reference by indicating the location of public places and municipal services such as hospitals, fire stations, libraries, schools, etc. Students will be making sentence-length notes on these maps, so a map which only includes arterial streets may be the best for this activity. Your local planning agency will probably be the best source for these maps, but you may be able to use Google Maps for this activity. The base map from Open Street Maps (<http://www.openstreetmap.org>) may also be useful.

Size may be the biggest challenge in assembling your materials. Students should have plenty of room to write on these maps, and this activity is best conducted in groups of 4 or more so that students will be able to easily compare notes. If possible, print your maps 20” x 20” or larger and post them on the walls of your classroom.

Activity: First, ask the class how people use maps, especially city maps. What kind of information do people usually get from these maps?

Introduce the base maps that students will be using for this activity. These are the kinds of

maps that you've just been talking about. Let them know that they're going to create a "user" map that will help make the original map better. To help students orient themselves, and to help them understand the kind of information they will add to the maps, ask them to circle one or more of the public places already printed on the map with pencil or plain ink and check for understanding.

Next, ask your students to mark the locations of public places they use everyday -- streets, bus stops, malls, businesses, parks, playgrounds, supermarkets. Ask them to mark these in pencil or plain ink. Ask them to draw them in if they don't already appear on the map. Students do not need to make an exhaustive list.

Next, ask your students to locate and mark one or two of their favorite public places with a blue marker, and to write a sentence at each marking which explains why this is one of their favorite places. Is there something they like to buy there? Is it a place with a lot of room to play? Finally, ask your students to locate and mark one or two public areas that they have some problem with. Is it a place where they avoid riding their bikes? Is it part of their school playground that should have another yard duty? Is it a barrier to access to part of their favorite park? A library with internet stations that are always full? Ask them to mark the locations with a red marker, and to write one sentence which describes the problem.

When students have finished, ask your students questions to help them understand the kind of map they've created. Is the information in their "favorites" and "problems" markings different in some way from the service information on the base map? How is it different?

Students are ready for the AHA! (or turning point) of this lesson once they begin to understand that they've added information that is evaluative as well as factual. At that point you can let students know how important their opinions really are. Their maps of public places don't just document their personal preferences. Their maps are an invaluable source of information to other community members (For example, a librarian would definitely want to know about students' frustration with the relative lack of internet access. Many store owners would want to know whether students felt welcome at their store).

As you lead this discussion, keep a list of the people who might want to see their maps, and use this as a potential list of real-world contacts for future lessons.

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, © 2002-2009, Center for Media Literacy, <http://www.medialit.com>