CONNECT!ONS Med!aLit moments

Consortium for Media Literacy *Volume No. 18* *June 2010*

In This Issue…

Theme: Television and Media Literacy **02**
From the Super Bowl to American Idol, live television is still able to command substantial audiences.

Research Highlights **03**
Television in a Networked Age -- marketing suggests that future television sets will be able to assemble an evening of programming based on individual personal profiles.

SportsTelevision and the Networking of Nostalgia -- sports occupy a unique place in the world of TV entertainment.

Norman Lear Center at USC released a study of local Los Angeles area TV News offering an in-depth analysis of news coverage in a major metropolitan area.

CML News **08**
CML's Tessa Jolls was a guest panelist at The Cable Show 2010 session on digital citizenship.

Media Literacy Resources **10**
A list of Resources addressing Television and Media Literacy

Med!aLit Moments **12**
What Would Scooby Do? In this MediaLit Moment, your students will have the chance to discover how iconic television images are used to enhance the appeal of everyday consumer products through the process of product branding.

Theme: Television and Media Literacy

If you think that television is a saurian vestige of a bygone era, think again. Did you see the inauguration of President Obama live? Did you see any of the Vancouver winter Olympic events in February? Where did you see them? From the Super Bowl to American Idol, live television is still able to command substantial audiences. And where original programming is attracting smaller audiences and fewer advertising dollars, social media and branding are helping to boost revenues. For example, the CW Network's "Gossip Girl" may not be a smash hit, but a decent, if not brisk online trade is taking place on the show's micro-site, which purveys new clothing modeled each week by the show's main characters (La Ferla, "Forget Gossip, Girl, the Buzz Is About the Clothes," New York Times, July 8, 2008). Moreover, from a media literacy standpoint, television is as relevant as it ever was. New research by the Kaiser Family Foundation and the British Office of Communications shows that children spend more time with television than any other medium, sometimes by a wide margin.

In this issue, we analyze news and research in the field, and suggest ways in which you, your children and students can respond to the changing social and commercial contexts in which television content is produced. We follow attempts to speed the development of interactive television advertising, and discuss the implications of ethnographic research which suggest that the behavior of most viewers is not changing all that much. In our research articles, we show how networking across television and other media works to increase brand affiliation among sports fans, and we discuss the findings of a new study by the USC Annenberg School of Communication on types of content featured in local television news programs. In our MediaLit Moment, elementary school students discover how long-running series like Scooby Doo become major merchandising franchises, and in our resources article, we direct you to compendia of relevant media literacy sources, free web archives of historic television content, and recent non-profit, academic and market research. Stay tuned.

Research Highlights

Television in a Networked Age

Speak to anyone at a marketing firm these days about the future of television, and the words you're most likely to hear are "personal" and "interactive." For example, Razorfish, a marketing company specializing in digital media, predicts that television will become "persona-based" by 2019. Future television sets will be able to assemble an evening of programming based on individual personal profiles, and people themselves may become channels as well, with other consumers subscribing to their personal content streams ("Future of TV: Part 2," razorfish.com).

This future scenario also reflects the anxieties of marketers attempting to cope today with the legacy of television's recent past. With the advent of cable, television channels and audiences began to splinter into niche groups which has led to dwindling advertising revenues, especially for the major broadcast networks. Interactive (or "addressable") advertising, which allows individual viewers to click an on-screen graphic to request and/or enter information, offers the hope of financial sustainability for everyone in the television food chain. For example, in early 2009 Big O Tires experienced a spike in traffic when it offered interactive coupons in select regional markets through a custom channel created by Time Warner Cable (Hampp, "Adressable ads are here," Advertising Age, April 13, 2009).

Viewers who engage with interactive advertisements will also be delivering audience and consumer information directly to advertisers and a wide range of third parties. In media literacy parlance, it isn't just the eyeballs of audiences that will be delivered to advertisers through the television programming of the future. The data collected through viewer response represents a potential marketing bonanza--though this frontier may look more like a regulated border in the near future. Spurred by complaints about the magnitude and scope of data collected by internet search engines and other online interactive advertisers, the House of Representatives introduced draft legislation in early May which would extend privacy protections on and offline. All these developments point to the need for students to learn how advertisements of all kinds are targeted to them.

While interactive advertising may become a permanent feature of the television landscape, the research supporting the persona-based brave new world of television may be fatally flawed. To date, the great majority of viewer research has been self-reported. In a May 1st special report on television, *The Economist* profiled Sarah Pearson, a founding partner in the newly formed research firm Actual Customer Behavior. Pearson recorded nearly 100,000 hours of video footage of British households watching television. The results: viewers almost universally surfed channels to see what was "on," and watched live television. Content delivered via DVR and video on demand were distant second and third choices.

As the introduction to this issue argues, the mass medium of television is still alive and well. For example, the Kaiser Family Foundation study mentioned earlier shows that television

content dominates the daily media diet of youth aged 8-18. They do multi-task with multiple screens, but time spent with music and audio, the next most popular medium, is still about half the time spent with television. In addition, a thorough study released last year by the Council for Research Excellence (www.researchexcellence.com) documents that Americans as a whole spend more screen time with television than with any other medium.

The *Economist* report makes a wry observation about public perceptions of the risks which different media pose to consumers: "As the internet grabs attention, television has become more pitied than feared. A Google search on the phrase 'threat from television' turns up some 500 results, many of them historical. 'Threat to television' generates eight times as many"(15). Television may be an "old" medium, but it is still one of the essential media to address in media literacy education.

Even as televisions begin to proliferate in the bedrooms of children across the developed world, the majority of television is watched in the living room with the entire family. Drawing from a variety of research, the *Economist* report argues that, though it may seem dated, "the image of the family clustered around the living room set is an accurate depiction of how most people watch television in most countries" (p. 8). Both Mom and Dad may be tired after a long day of work, and the kids may be busy texting during the commercials, but watching television has not yet been worn out of the social fabric of our lives. And that may be the good news. After wrangling over who gets the remote, some families will take the time to discuss what they really think about "what's on" -- an essential path to media literacy.

Sports Television and the Networking of Nostalgia

Media literacy education provides a framework for questioning our relationship with media and our affiliation or identification with powerful images, words and sounds – and mediated sports and fantasy games provide examples of a particularly rich media environment to apply media literacy skills.

Sports occupy a unique place in the world of American entertainment. Like the adventures of Huck Finn or Tom Sawyer, sports entertainment promises to fulfill the pastoral yearning of audiences for a simpler, more innocent American past. Rooting for a home team offers sports fans a sense of belonging in a restless, placeless society. By the same token, watching sports can function as a universal American experience. People of all races and classes congregate in the same ballpark, and as popular call-in radio programs such as the Jim Rome show demonstrate, men from widely different backgrounds can feel comfortable talking about sports--though women may not always be included in the conversation (Nylund 2004).

Some women do become fans for much the same reasons. Jennifer Chan, a 2009 Boston University graduate, lives with her parents in Washington, D.C. With no full-time job prospects in sight, Chan works part-time at a local J Crew store, and spends much of her meager income on Duke University men's basketball games. "To me, the most astonishing. . .thing is that,

despite how bad the economy and the job market is. . .fans come out to these games to cheer on their beloved teams. For those 40 minutes, everyone is fixated on the sport, maybe as a distraction from all the outside negativity. . ." (Wickman, McLaughlin and Lakin, 2010, n.p.).

American sports entertainment has the ability to appeal to a deeply felt need for affiliation—a need which can be easily exploited by commercial media. Buy a jersey with a printed "Duke" logo and you can feel as if you're playing alongside the team. With such powerful media influences at play, consumers need good media literacy skills to make conscious choices about sports entertainment, if not choices that reflect authentic needs. Recent developments in the cross-media branding of fantasy football are a good case in point.

The game of fantasy football is based on individual statistical performances by elite athletes in the field, and fantasy leaguers assemble and manipulate an imaginary team of athletes, attempting to maximize the team's statistical output. In its infancy, fantasy football was the province of a tiny, wonkish subculture. In the mid-1990's, fantasy games began to migrate online, a move that streamlined scoring and made large amounts of information on each player readily accessible.

By now fantasy football has become a $1.5 billion industry with 20 million players networked across multiple media (Oates, 2009, p.36). ESPN's website provides instant live scoring, and ESPN's and ABC's telecasts of NFL games deliver fantasy statistics online. ESPN televises the NFL draft, and its website features a dedicated page with updates from online voters, and links to information about every potential draftee. Electronic Arts, which first released its video game *Madden NFL* in 1989, is now exploiting similar opportunities for branding across media platforms. In 2006, ESPN and EA Sports formalized a fifteen-year plan to integrate their brands, and today the game features many of the same advertisements that any fan might see in a stadium or on air. The *Madden* franchise has even become the topic of the new reality television series *Madden Nation*—which is distributed on the NFL Channel, among other outlets.

All of these venues include online forums where fans can debate the merits of fantasy properties, talk trash, and otherwise interact with fellow fans. As one group of sports marketing researchers asserts, "New media have begun to compensate for live word-of-mouth, and fans now have unprecedented opportunities to communicate with the sport and each other" (quoted in Oates, 2009, p. 38). The 360 degree social networking afforded to fantasy football players facilitates the personal affiliations that many sports fans crave. But in addition, the seamless and immediate integration of platforms "naturalizes" the presence of the brands which sponsor and support those social connections. What does it mean to "communicate with the sport" in such a media environment? Without media literacy education, fantasy players may form subconscious, unquestioned personal affiliations with the brands themselves.

Bibliography:
Nylund, D. (2004). When in Rome: heterosexism, homophobia, and sports talk radio. Journal of Sport and Social Issues. 28 (2), 136-168.
Oates, T.P. (2009). New media and the repackaging of NFL fandom. Sociology of Sport Journal. 26 (1), 31-49.
Wicman, K., McLaughlin, S., and Lakin, T. (2010, April 3). Sports in the US: year-round madness. Christian Science Monitor (csmonitor.com) Available at http://www.csmonitor.com/The-Culture/Sports/2010/0403/Sports-in-the-US-Year-round-madness

Lear Center Releases Study of Los Angeles Television News

In March, the Norman Lear Center at the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism released a study of local Los Angeles area TV news that provides some of the most in-depth topical analysis of local news coverage in a major metropolitan area. Most researchers to date have sampled the top-rated one or two half-hours of news on any given day. This study is based on 490 hours of news programming recorded on 14 days in August and September of 2009.

Authors Martin Kaplan, director of the Lear Center, and Matthew Hale, chair of Public and Healthcare Administration at Seton Hall University, note that, despite the attention given to them lately, bloggers and citizen journalists have yet to become major players in local news markets. According to a 2007 Free Press study, city-specific news websites report original hard news only about 3.6% of the time. Kaplan and Hale were also influenced by a 2009 Pew Research Center poll on local news. Over two-thirds of respondents to the poll said that they tuned in to local television stations for updates on local news. This result led the authors to ask, if most local residents are relying on local television stations, are they actually serving the public interest?

The study does not include any final analysis or commentary, but some of the results are less than encouraging. When time for advertisements, teasers ("Stay with us. . ."), and sports and weather are subtracted, a composite half hour of Los Angeles local television news includes 15 minutes and 44 seconds for all other coverage. Of that time, 2 minutes and 50 seconds are devoted to crime, more than any other type of story. Furthermore, one third of all leading stories are crime-related. In addition, just 27 seconds of 2:50 is allotted to "civic crime," stories which include rewards offered, help needed by the public, public corruption, police shootings, new law enforcement efforts, and similar stories.

The next largest block of time (2:26) is given over to soft news—anything from human interest stories to fashion, travel, weddings and animals gone wild. Crime, soft news and entertainment news typically displace hard news in a local television line-up, which is allotted 5:07 in the composite half hour. Of that coverage, Los Angeles business/economy stories take up 29 seconds, and stories about Los Angeles area government take up 22 seconds. Hard news is

not completely absent, but is typically “softened.” One minute and 16 seconds are taken up by stories which profile individual residents dealing with local civic issues like transportation, community health, the environment and education.

Studies by the American Psychological Association have demonstrated that televised violence can have a cyclical effect in which viewers decide that it may be too dangerous to leave home in the evening, and then consume more violent entertainment and news. The fact that local television stations in Los Angeles emphasize crime stories in their news reporting suggest that programming directors are aware that these stories are likely to keep audiences in their living rooms—but should that be the purpose of local television news? In the end, the emphasis on crime coverage comes at the expense of news which could inform city residents of the progress of local government efforts, or inspire Angelenos to work together for the welfare of fellow citizens.

To read a copy of the report, visit the Lear Center website at www.learcenter.org

References are given in the introduction to the Lear Center report to the poll by the Pew Research Center Poll for the People & the Press and the Free Press study on local news websites.

Conclusions on studies on violence in television may be found in:
Violence & Youth: Psychology's Response. Volume I: Summary Report of the American Psychological Association Commission on Violence and Youth, Washington, DC: APA July 1993.

For a comprehensive citation, consult ERIC and search for ERIC # 379056

CML News

http://2010.thecableshow.com

Raising Digital Citizens

At The Cable Show 2010, held last month in Los Angeles, CA, a panel of experts from industry, academia and the non-profit world addressed the importance of raising children as "digital citizens." The session titled, *Growing up Digitally: Citizenship in the Broadband Age* brought together Frank Gallagher, Cable in the Classroom; Trent Anderson, Cablevision; Karla Ballard, One Economy; Kiernan McGuire, Common Sense Media, and Tessa Jolls from CML.

Frank Gallagher moderated the session. He began by offering Cable in the Classroom's working definition of *digital citizenship* as including safety and security, media, information and technology literacies, ethical behavior and civic engagement.

During the panel session, Gallagher held up a pencil and commented that "this pencil is a technology." Like pencils or the Gutenberg press, new technologies often require people to adjust their expectations and to become accustomed to change. When asked whether our society will overcome the challenges that schools and the public face regarding new interactive technologies, CML's Tessa Jolls responded that it is "inevitable. But let's not forget that education plays a key part in smoothing these transitions."

Panel topics included:

- Media literacy and digital literacy as resources in the development of digital citizens and in broadband adoption projects
- Ethics of digital citizenship
- Cable's role in helping families manage media content from multiple sources
- Public policy benefits in supporting digital citizenship education

For more information go to: http://2010.thecableshow.com/

CONSORTIUM
for MEDIA LITERACY

Uniting for Development

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.

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.

http://www.ConsortiumforMediaLiteracy.org

Media Literacy Resources

Teaching Tip: Summer is typically a time when children watch TV and go to the movies; be sure to tune in yourself and keep notes on interesting media moments to share with your class when school resumes.

Resources for Television and Media Literacy

Center for Media Literacy http://www.medialit.org
The Center has a substantial number of articles on television and popular culture available on its site, on topics ranging from healthy TV habits for families to alternatives to crime reporting. Click the "Media Issues and Topics" search bar to search for articles.

The Economist
To read the special report on television, visit http://www.economist.com/specialreports

Museum of Broadcast Communication http://www.museum.tv
The Museum of Broadcast Communication not only owns a formidable archive of classic television broadcasts, from shows hosted by Edward R. Murrow to the Carol Burnett Show, but has also made many of them available for online streaming free of charge. The museum has also compiled collections on historical topics including the Civil Rights movement and the Vietnam War. The essays in the museum's Encyclopedia of Education are brief but substantive. The Encyclopedia: http://www.museum.tv/publicationssection.php?page=520

NBC Education http://www.nbclearn.com
Though access to NBC's on-demand news archive is available only on a subscription basis, NBC also has a rotating series of free video clips organized by subject area. The news videos in the on-demand archive are designed for classroom use, and the online player features a searchable K-12 standards tool to search by state, grade and subject.

Pennsylvania Digital Learning Library http://www.pdesas.org/module/content/search/
Recently, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the Council of Chief State School Officers formed an education technology initiative to create digital learning resource centers aligned with state standards. In partnership with PBS and Penn State Public Broadcasting (WPSU), Pennsylvania has launched the first of these state digital learning libraries. The teacher resources include unit plans, lesson plans and activities.

PBS Media Literacy http://www.pbs.org/teachers/media_lit
The PBS media literacy page includes links to relevant PBS web sites and programs, activity ideas and a directory to research organizations.

Cable in the Classroom Media Smart http://www.ciconline.org/mediasmart
Cable in the Classroom maintains a large collection of useful media literacy resources, from

discussion of media literacy concepts to news and task force reports. Media Smart also includes archived issues of Threshold and Cable in the Classroom Magazine, covering many aspects of media literacy and children's media use.

Television and Child Development, by Judith Page Van Evra, Routledge Press, 2004
Now in its third edition, the book synthesizes communications and child development research to discuss what is currently known about the media's impact on children's physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. The book includes a chapter on intervention possibilities, parent strategies and education, and a concluding summary of findings.

Generation M2: Media in the Lives of 8- to 18-Year Olds http://www.kff.org/entmedia/
The report reviews the Kaiser Family Foundation's second national survey of youth media habits (The first was undertaken in 2004). According to the current report, the amount of time people spend with entertainment media has risen dramatically, especially among minority youth.

British Office of Communications Children's Media Literacy Audit Report 2010
The multi-dimensional analysis contained in this report of OfCom's quantitative survey of 2,000 children and their caregivers provides one of the most comprehensive pictures of children's media use to date, and corroborates findings from the *Economist* on television viewing behaviors. You can also read a discussion of the OfCom report in the May issue of Connections. To download a PDF copy of the report, point your browser to:
http://www.ofcom.org.uk/advice/media_literacy/medlitpub/medlitpubrss/ukchildrensml/ukchildrensml1.pdf

Med!aLit Moments

What Would Scooby Do? Branding Children's Television

Some images, sounds and words retain a strong hold on the American popular imagination for generations, and children's animated television certainly has its share. Who can forget the long-haired slacker in the pale green shirt who says "Zoinks!" and cowers in fear while a large, slobbery, talking dog holds him in his hands, er, paws? Frodo lives, but *Scooby Doo, Where Are You?*, one of the most popular animated series in American history, lives on and on, its shelf life extended indefinitely through decades of branded merchandising.

In this MediaLit Moment, your students will have the chance to discover how iconic television images are used to enhance the appeal of everyday consumer products through the process of product branding. The activity included here will also help your students learn how marketers of branded products use creative techniques to attract the attention of a wide range of potential customers.

Have students use popular images from a children's television show to design a concept for a branded consumer product.

AHA!: The company that produces Scooby Doo puts words and pictures from the show on things that people buy—which makes it more likely that people will buy them!

Key Question #5: Why is this message being sent?
Core Concept #5: Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.

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: 4-6

Materials: overhead projector, transparencies, access to computer and color printer, and the following images downloaded through Google images:

Scooby Doo's dog tag by itself: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/4/48/SDtag.png
Scooby Doo with tag: http://www.profilebrand.com/imgs/layouts/30tv-shows/1296/1296_L-scooby-doo.jpg
Scooby Doo party products:
http://images.celebrateexpress.com/mgen/merchandiser/42113.jpg

Mystery Machine van without any passengers: http://www.vectorjunky.com/gallery/s/Scooby-Doo-Mysterymachine-001.jpg

Mystery Machine van with Scooby Doo characters:
http://media.giantbomb.com/uploads/0/3093/1080384-mystery_machine_large.jpg

Mystery Machine Lunch Bag:
http://www.babble.com/CS/blogs/droolicious/2009/03/lunchboxshop_2039_8532204.jpg

Activity:
The activity begins with a teaser. Show the image with only the dog tag and ask students if they have any idea what the tag represents. Give them verbal clues if you like—that it's a dog tag, comes from an animated show, belongs to a talking dog, etc. Or show them the image of the Mystery Machine without any passengers. Or keep giving them clues until you show them one of the images that clearly reveals the source. Draw attention to the fact that students can quickly recognize the significance of the images with just a few clues.

Next, show them the images of the Scooby Doo branded products. The words and images from the show that were so easy to recognize are now being used to make everyday objects more interesting. Who's going to remember any old lunch bag? But a lunch bag that looks like the Mystery Van? The things people buy are called products. So, the company 1) uses those easy-to-recognize words and pictures to attract people to the product, and most importantly 2) makes money off of the product when people (called customers) buy it.

You can also tell students that putting these words and pictures on products to attract customers is called branding.

Production Activity:
Key Question #2 for Producers: Does my message reflect understanding in format, creativity and technology?
Key Question #3 for Producers: Is my message engaging and compelling for my target audience?

Before starting with this activity, you may want to ask students to come up with a list of words and pictures that they remember from the show and that other are people are likely to remember, too. Rut Roh!

Next, tell students that they're going to act like they're part of the company that puts all the words and images (branding) on the products that customers buy. The company is looking for new products for the Scooby Doo brand. Ask them to create a concept for a Scooby Doo consumer product that no one has seen before. (Stick with consumer products rather than

media products, since students may easily conflate media products with brand images). What combination of words and pictures would be good to use to attract customers to this particular product? Possible ideas to get them started: Shaggy Hair Care, Daphne's Fashion Accessories. Depending on the interests and abilities of your students, you can ask them to come up with anything from short descriptions to fully designed logos and illustrations. In addition, tell students that they need to be able to answer one question when they've finished their concepts: What exactly did they do to attract customers to this product? In this case, you're asking students to talk about creative techniques, and possibly about ways of targeting an audience as well. It isn't enough for students to say that customers will like the product just because they see Scooby Doo on it. For example, if the product is a men's tie (a product that already exists), a man who works at an office (maybe even their Dad) might like the product because a talking dog is just so silly that it might make his boss and co-workers laugh.

Extended Activity:
Key Question #3: How might different people understand this message differently?
Core Concept #3: Different people experience the same media message differently.

The history of Scooby Doo's initial development may also help to explain the show's broad and long-lasting appeal to audiences. In the mid- to late 1960s, CBS and Hanna Barbera Productions were under pressure from parent's television groups who objected to the gratuitous violence of *Johnny Quest* and other Hanna Barbera action cartoons. Fred Silverman, executive in charge of CBS children's television programming, looked to two sources for inspiration: *I Love a Mystery*, a 1940s radio program which followed the pulp fiction adventures of three detectives bent on solving mysterious crimes around the world, and the 1959-1963 television sitcom *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis*, about a scatterbrained teenager and his friends. Scooby Doo would reference the suspenseful and supernatural elements of the radio show, but with Dobie Gillis as a touchstone, violence was left out of the new series, and so were the masculine stereotypes reinforced by earlier animation action heroes.

In the extended activity, help students learn more about Core Concept #3 by having them compare Scooby Doo with a children's show that does feature action characters or superheroes. The second show should also have a large product line and a successful history of branding products. Iron Man might be a good choice. Students should ask questions about the likely audience(s) for each show, and how these shows appeal to their audiences. They should also ask questions about the creative techniques and audience strategies that marketers would use to sell products from each product line.

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, © 2002-2010, Center for Media Literacy, http://www.medialit.com