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Truth in Consequence: Citizenship in a Digital Age

Part 2: A Power Shift in the Media EcoSystem

Core Concept # 5: Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.

Key Question #5 (Deconstruction): Why is this message being sent?

Key Question #5 (Construction): Have I communicated my purpose effectively?

Stories about so-called “fake news” abound, and while the term is bandied about, it is little understood yet widely discussed. Is “fake news” about bias? About disagreements on fundamental principles or arguments? About verifiable falsehoods or perceptions about truths? About generating revenues through attention-seeking headlines and fabricated story lines? As we often say in media literacy, we have questions about the answers.

But we can say with confidence that no one should “outsource” his or her brain for others to decide, nor do we wish to invite censorship or filtering. As power flows to individuals through social media, the traditional notions of journalism are upended and we are now all citizen journalists, with the collective and individual responsibility to be thoughtful and critical before circulating or consuming opinions or gossip or so-called “fact.” Whom do we trust, about what, and why? Who decides? Who checks the checkers?

It is noteworthy that though the word “fake” has gained currency, its opposite – authentic – is seldom mentioned. Yet people yearn for authenticity, even though the feelings associated with authenticity may differ from the facts.

Fortunately, people today are gaining voice – and the opportunity to share authentically (or not) - that has long been denied them. The young and the old, the rich and the poor, the political and non- -- all are participating in a major power shift that is well underway. Youth are often leading the charge, often leaving their elders at a loss: “There’s no generation of parents and teachers that have gone through what we’re going through right now. We can’t pull upon our life experiences,” said Lynette T. Owens, founder and Global Director of Trend Micro’s Internet Safety for Kids and Families (ISKF) program.

And the great power shift occurring in the media ecosystem is finally calling attention to the need for media literacy among citizens, who now report Instagram, Facebook and YouTube among the sources of information they use most consistently – both to consume and to produce “news” that they value. These values may clash with those of traditional media, which has become more and more consolidated and with failing business models. Yet, now that it is under threat, traditional media is being yearned for as a world order that no longer prevails, with all the perils of lost control and uncharted waters going forward. New definitions of journalism are now emerging; new rules and roles for journalists are being explored, with new ideas about journalistic credentials and access, while at the same time, traditional journalism jobs are vanishing. Who are today’s journalists? is now a fundamental question.

Journalism is being democratized, and as the Fourth Estate is now in every citizens' hands, Franklin Roosevelt's words ring ever more true: "Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education."

But media literacy has not been widely taught, at university level or in K-12, and without this foundation, citizenship in a digital age is imperiled. In the media literacy field, we have long advocated for skepticism – for a healthy questioning – rather than cynicism, where the underlying assumption is that everything is bad or untrustworthy or illegitimate. Yet through its very nature, media often promotes the cynical – the fear, the distrust of "others," the conflicts and calculations, the transactions rather than the transformative.

Elizabeth Thoman, CML's Founder who passed away in December 2016 (see CML News), warned of this type of distrust that media spreads in her Crash Course in Media Literacy, dating back to the late 1990s. In helping participants deconstruct an ad for cellphones – depicting a woman lost and stuck in a car on a lonely country road in rainy weather – Thoman pointed out the fear engendered in the commercial, and how a stranger's approach was shown as a sinister threat rather than a welcome rescue. This worldview was presented, of course, to sell cellphones, yet such worldviews have an effect that is cumulative: "This promotion of fear undermines trust in our fellow citizens, and trust is what underpins democracy," Thoman said. Today – partially due to a lack of media literacy in a media-saturated world – the lack of trust in our society and our institutions is endemic and destructive, and the attacks constant. Yet we seldom question why or take steps to equip citizens with the education they need to help in their search for authenticity.

And so the quest to help people learn to discern continues. Yet the authentic – the authentic self, the authentic cause, the authentic purposes – are as hard as ever to identify and find. It is this quest that this month's interviews with Kimberly Brodie and with Alan Simpson may shed light on in regards to citizenship. Our MediaLit Moments activity focuses on the difference between fact and opinion.

Interview Highlights

Interview with Kimberly Brodie, Founder and CEO of The Digital Peace Project™

A former educator from California, Kim became passionate about the thoughtful, safe, and ethical use of today's digital tools upon serving as a Presidential Appointee at the United States Department of Education. She served as chief of staff in the Office of Innovation and Improvement and special assistant in the Office of Educational Technology. Since finishing her posts at the U.S. Department of Education, Kim has developed curriculum and provided trainings both nationally and internationally to assist individuals, schools and organizations with setting up cultures of respect in today's digital world.

Tessa Jolls (TJ): People say they don't want divisiveness, but nevertheless, it's happening. Let's talk about that in the context of digital citizenship. You had a top-level job at the US Department of Education during the Bush Administration, and when I first met you, we were looking at digital citizenship and online safety, and I know that you did quite a bit of work in that arena while you worked for the Department. So, I would appreciate hearing your take on what change you've seen from those early days, and where you are now in terms of how you look at citizenship in the digital age.

Kimberly Brodie (KB): Yes, I served as an adviser on online safety issues in the Office of Educational Technology at the US Department of Education and continued working on these issues as chief of staff of the Office of Innovation and Improvement. Both of these offices are clearly committed to utilizing today's technology to improve and transform education. I think it's helpful to also mention that I came to these posts having had both classroom teaching and school site administration experience.

To understand the evolution of the online safety conversation from those early days, to how it has transformed and where I believe the focus needs to be today and going forward, I think it is important to discuss things in the context of the times in which those messages and policies were being created. I began working on these issues at the national level in 2006. If you recall, at that time many tragic stories of cyber bullying related suicides were often in the national media, the television show "To Catch a Predator" was prime time, sexting issues were receiving a great deal of attention and dramatic portrayals of children "growing up online" left many in absolute panic over the safety and wellbeing of our children. At the time, this very real, justifiable fear drove many of our awareness messages as we began to try to address these serious issues from classroom to national policy level. It's not that we got it wrong back then. It's that we did the best we could with what we knew. But, we were undeniably caught in a very reactionary position of putting out fires as connectivity skyrocketed and these serious concerns presented themselves. To me, those were the origins of why the online safety conversation became rooted in fear.

We were addressing issues after the technology exploded, after symptoms started showing up that were alarming. Any good teacher knows that without a solid, positive classroom

management strategy, you will end up ineffectively putting out fires all year long.

TJ: At the time, you had no way of delving into the issues because the technology was brand new.

KB: Yes, again we were caught putting out fires and doing the best we could, but this is not a strategy. We were so focused on safety concerns that we didn't really have an opportunity to step back and address the root cause of many of the issues. It's a pretty natural human response when something feels out of control, to quickly try to put limits in place to try to regain some sense of stability and order. So, we did that with issue-based awareness campaigns and fierce efforts to catch up our laws, policies and regulations to the rapidly advancing technology. What I think we ended up doing inadvertently was disempowering and isolating by driving fear.

And then, of course, in an attempt to move out of this reactionary "putting out fires approach" and form strategy that would *actually* provide a foundation for our children to navigate their digital world, we moved into the digital citizenship conversation. I remember those early meetings when our focus shifted to an emphasis on viewing today's children as "digital citizens" living in a fundamentally different world, with entirely new skill sets needed to thrive. Many were adding their input to what these new skills sets should include to adequately prepare these "digital citizens". I think this was a well-intended evolution to try to get out of symptom management and see our kids today as citizens in a digital age. I'm using the terminology that way intentionally versus using "digital citizens" because I think it is important to remember that these "digital citizens" are still children who need and deserve an opportunity to form a healthy sense of self through whole child development in order to navigate their world confidently and successfully. Their world just happens to be highly charged with a lot of connectivity now.

In viewing today's children as "digital citizens," we started to develop a strategy that would prepare today's young people for the world in which they live. We now organized the issues and concerns into "buckets" of digital ethics, safety and security and focused a great deal on teaching rights and responsibilities in the digital age. And here's where I think the efforts fell short:

- 1) I don't think it changed much. The terminology changed, but really this was still driven by controlling the issues and risks, now more organized into digital ethics, safety and security. And, while it is critical that we empower our children with tips and tools to deal with negative situations, it is still only a piece of the puzzle.
- 2) I'm also a big believer in the power of language to empower or disempower. I think we may have overcomplicated an already highly charged issue, with unnecessary emphasis on seeing children today as these far different "digital citizens" for which we are entirely ill-equipped to guide. Again, I think in some areas this ended up inadvertently disempowering and isolating key people, like parents and teachers, who now felt they had to be a cyber security specialist from Harvard to effectively parent or teach today.
- 3) As an educator, I'll also mention that the implementation of digital citizenship focused on separately teaching digital ethics, safety and security in isolation, wasn't always practical or the most effective way to weave these important concepts into classroom teaching. It became

another “item to cover” rather than an integral part of teaching and learning in today’s world.

TJ: It is easy to see the gaps in hindsight. So where do you see us going from here?

KB: First of all, I think our past efforts can be easily summed up with the wisdom of Maya Angelou, “We do the best we can with what we know. When we know better we do better.” Early on in our conversation, I said I think it is important to understand the evolution of these issues in the context of what we were dealing with at those times. The really good news is that we *now* absolutely do know better, and this can help us create more effective approaches. If you look at the groundbreaking research around the study of happiness, positive psychology, health and wellness, one can see a huge shift away from symptom-management, focused on trying to achieve joy, health and wellness by eliminating every symptom. Newer science suggests that focusing on problems and symptoms does not get us to our solution. This isn’t about ignoring concerns, but it *is* about being intentional about where we put our energy to grow what we actually want. This shift in thinking and focus is huge, and much more effective and empowering. As we shift our focus, we absolutely change our outcomes. This is the paradigm shift we need.

My work today operates from this paradigm and weaves in the knowledge and awareness of these newer studies. I begin with a much more intentional focus on what we actually do want to grow and then aim to create supportive tools and resources to help us get there. At a high level, my overall goal is peace and authentic connection for every person and certainly every child. I believe it is our birthright, and I think it is important that we operate with this common goal in mind. With this approach I no longer lead with the technology. I do not view it as the devil or the blessing. Rather, I see the technology as powerful but neutral. Our solution doesn’t lie in it being either. Our real solution comes from reconnection with a healthy sense of self and our connection to one another. With that, we can then engage with today’s technology in powerfully authentic and meaningful ways.

TJ: Is this working? Do you see different outcomes by operating from this paradigm?

KB: Absolutely. It’s exciting to see what unfolds when we make this shift in our awareness and in our focus. We actually end up truly empowering children and individuals to develop a sense of self and be able to maintain it in our highly connected world. To use the health analogy again, when we get out of managing sickness and symptoms, and begin to take steps to live balanced, healthy and well, those “symptoms” that have been plaguing us, naturally start to fall by the wayside. It isn’t the other way around. We don’t have to put out every fire and heal every symptom before we have the inner-peace and authentic connection we want. The solution is an inside-out approach. When you come from a place of authentic connection with yourself first, it releases the need to “appear perfect” to stay relevant and connected. Instead, it’s about engaging from a place of innate worth and connection to your own values, gifts and talents.

I think much of our work now is to reconnect and value what we skipped over in well-intended panic and reaction. Let’s get rooted in how we develop the whole child, how we actually help

them stay connected to who they authentically are, and work to create classrooms and communities that embrace this and connect from there. And when those authentically connected, whole individuals then use the power of technology, well now it's a whole different experience that can absolutely create a positive ripple effect that impacts our entire world.

But it starts with each of us individually stepping out of victimhood and embracing our own personal power to create the world we want, and committing to act in alignment with what we say we value. I'm thinking of an example at a school that I worked with a few months ago. I was asked to participate in one of their after-school activities, involving the broader school community, the Parent Teacher Association, and of course the administration. This was a school who valued respect and responsibility and wanted to maintain a school culture that embraced these values. As they aimed to reduce bullying, I was asked to provide some helpful feedback on their school community. As I was watching some of the dynamics that went on during this after-school event, it was hard not to notice some less than kind, easily eliminated behavior. While it was a schoolwide activity, not all children were allowed to participate, and parent groups were allowed to hold try-outs that only allowed select children to participate with their classmates. The event happened to take place in the multi-purpose room at the school. As I was observing some of these easy to resolve issues, I happen to see that on the back wall hung an 8 x 10 piece of paper that said, "Don't Bully." When providing feedback, I suggested they embrace a couple of shifts in their focus to reflect a school culture that was more in alignment with their mission of kindness, respect and responsibility. I started with suggesting that rather than lead with the negative of hanging one sign against bullying, they might try having every child, from every class, create a poster that reflects the good they would like to see grow at their school: kindness, respect, friendship, etc. and then use each of these to create a student mural on the back of the multi-purpose room that reflects the school culture they want to grow. This is a very practical and easy example of changing where we put our energy to get more positive outcomes. This isn't difficult. It simply asks us to become very mindful about what we want to create and intentional about where we are putting our focus and energy to get there.

There's a reason, in classrooms, even at a kindergarten level, we embrace positive reinforcement, because it works!

There's an inspiring quote from Mother Teresa that speaks to this shift and being very intentional about where we put our energy. Mother Teresa was once asked why she didn't participate in anti-war demonstrations. Her response was, "I will never do that, but as soon as you have a pro-peace rally, I'll be there."

TJ: Wow! That's it.

KB: Right?! Her words and wisdom so perfectly address this necessary energy shift. It is that simple and yet that profound. We must be very intentional about where we place our focus and efforts, if we are to achieve our desired outcome. To me, our desired outcome is still peace and human connection.

TJ: This connects beautifully with media literacy work because, for example, we have a framework called “The Empowerment Spiral” of Awareness, Analysis, Reflection and Action. That’s totally compatible with a whole-child approach because we always say, you bring yourself to the message, and to your interpretation of it and to your sharing of it -- you bring your whole self. You can’t divorce yourself, and you can’t divorce your relationship with media because your whole being has to be there.

KB: Exactly. It is absolutely true and essential that we “bring our whole selves” to our interaction and experience with media. So, we have to stop skipping over the essential element of allowing the development of the whole-child. The healthy connection with media and technology we seek, begins with developing a healthy and whole connection with self. Our work then begins with helping each child form a true sense of self. It is from that sense of self that a healthy interaction with the power of today’s technology and media is formed. I can’t say it enough: Outside-in never gets us to the solutions we are seeking. True, healthy connection is always formed from the inside-out. This is the core ingredient we have too often forgotten. You take this part out of the recipe, and it simply doesn’t bake well. Priority one, you have to see the growth and development of the whole child as essential, not optional. From there they can connect meaningfully and authentically with their world, including media and technology.

The consistent message I hear from parents, teachers and other concerned individuals, is “I’m tired of all the disconnection. I want more connection, and I want my children to feel connected.” I hear this over and over again. It is time we honor the fact that this is our basic human need, and not an optional extra. It is essential to our own wellbeing and to the wellbeing of our children. When we embrace this reality and make a shift to honor this, we can’t help but become more connected and united.

TJ: And, this doesn’t require us to all think exactly the same in order to feel connected?

KB: Not at all. It actually frees us up to embrace our individuality, while remaining rooted in our common humanity. If we forget to embrace this basic human right and need, or neglect to allow the healthy and whole development of each child, we end up with an insecure culture, where it no longer feels safe to be your unique self or share a differing opinion. If your sense of worth and connection relies on the validation of others, your cup is simply never going to be full and it is going to be extremely difficult to engage with the world in a happy, healthy, and authentic way.

So, not only do we not solve our problems from the outside-in, but we don’t gain our worth from the outside-in either. Think of how this awareness alone can shift our interaction with social media significantly. When we have a developed sense of self-worth, we aren’t using media and technology to try to gain our worth and belonging. This helps us develop a much healthier relationship with media and we can start to use today’s tools in a much more meaningful way.

TJ: There’s a lot of discussion right now about creating a new platform for online safety and digital citizenship dialogue. In closing, can you briefly address your view of next steps?

KB: As the saying goes, “If you do what you’ve always done, you’ll get what you’ve always gotten.” I’ve spent the last few years building a peace project that embraces this new paradigm and provides a roadmap to help us all *very practically* get to the peace and true connection we are seeking. It is based on the concepts we’ve discussed and rooted in research that supports this paradigm shift. I believe we’ll be ready to share this resource very soon. With respect to the national and international dialogue around these issues, one essential next step is to invite and allow new voices into the conversation that understand the power of this paradigm shift that embraces the healthy and whole development of every child. This can no longer be seen as a technology. Instead, it must be approached as an opportunity to grow profound human connection. Everyone has a stake in the solution. I’m looking forward to working with a broader cross-section of groups interested in utilizing their assets to help us grow healthy, human connection from classroom to global community. When we unite to use our unique assets for good, and make this shift to intentionally “do things differently”, we no longer have to live in fear and isolation of our highly connected world, and can begin to imagine the possibilities!

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Interview with Alan Simpson, iKeepSafe

Alan Simpson works with iKeepSafe, an international non-profit coalition working to help all children learn and thrive with technology and digital media. iKeepSafe helps educators, families, companies, policymakers and others navigate emerging issues – including addressing concerns about student privacy, and fostering adoption and smart use of education technology. Simpson has an extensive background in preK12 education and technology advocacy, including at Common Sense Media, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, and Voices for Illinois Children.

TJ: Alan, what do you think the state of the digital citizenship community and field is?

AS: There are some big picture aspects and answers to that question, and then there are some more immediate answers. To take the more immediate ones as a first topic, there are some rising concerns right now about bullying and harassment online, and the degree to which that has happened both within politics and outside of politics, such as reports that there is a rise of online bullying within schools. But there are also issues in the news right now around fake news and sponsored news. So part of me thinks about how much those daily news items are reminding us in the field about how much digital citizenship and media literacy continue to converge. And so those short term issues are important because if highlighting those issues makes more parents and teachers and students more aware of the challenges of digital citizenship and digital media literacy, then that's good news.

One of the challenges of working in this space has been, "Well, are we too academic? Are we talking about this at a level where other people aren't? And are we having a debate that isn't getting to the audiences that need to hear it and be part of it?" And, so maybe the upside of this news is that more people will be aware. For example, how much we all now get our news from

digital media sources, and folks are very concerned right now about whether it's the media job as gatekeeper to do a better job of making sure there's better information available. But a flipside of that argument is that now – and always – it's the reader, the user, the student, the customer's job to figure out what's reliable, and factual, and relevant. And those are fundamental questions of media literacy.

TJ: Yes, those are foundational skills.

AS: On the big picture level, this convergence of digital citizenship and media literacy is long overdue. I have felt that too often, media literacy as a topic did not make a connection to digital citizenship, and I can understand some of the reasons why, when digital citizenship might encompass codes of conduct for young students and for K-12, whereas media literacy is a higher functionality around really judging and evaluating what we can believe and where it comes from. But the inter-relations are becoming much more clear now.

Part of my guide here is having been a history major, and having, many years ago, to write a senior thesis for my major. What I learned in doing that, and in reflecting upon it later, was that the most valuable lesson of writing a history thesis was writing history and learning firsthand that the history books I'd read might have gotten some things wrong on a specific issue, or might have misquoted or done less than an ideal job of analyzing what was actually being debated at the time.

The fundamental lesson is that human beings write histories. And in the same way, one of the fundamentals of media literacy is appreciating and truly understanding that someone else wrote this history or this statement or this blog. He or she has opinions and biases and flaws, and makes mistakes just like every other human, which doesn't mean you can't believe what they said. It means you have to be careful and thoughtful about what sources you trust and what you trust them for, and how you evaluate them. The admonition to trust but verify, has always connected for me regarding media literacy, and now digital citizenship. It's not to say, you can't believe anything, but very much more to say, none of this was written by the great and powerful Oz. There is no great and powerful Oz. There is always a man or woman behind the curtain, and it is your job as a student, as a teacher, as a consumer of information, to look behind the curtain.

TJ: Yes, we're all media creators now, and we're all media consumers, and we're all human.

AS: Yes. One of the ways that I think this ties back to the digital citizenship aspect is that I've never felt that these two circles – digital citizenship and media literacy -- were disconnected. My Venn diagram of these two fields shows a great deal of overlap.

So, when we talk in terms of bullying, the lesson we try to start with that is age appropriate, is very much based on the golden rule. Treat other kids the way you would like to be treated. Treat other people online the way you would like to be treated. But the bigger part of that, or a connected part of that, is to also appreciate that you are creating this online space in which you live. You play a

role in that. Because, I think many people, not just students, still tend to view the online world around them as something that someone else has built. And they don't always appreciate the fact that they themselves are creating their own world.

And so some of our work around bullying and around fair, safe and smart behavior starts with "Hey, you as an individual can help make this online mobile space, where you play and learn and live, a better place. Because you do have a role in it." And so that's maybe a little bit more of the citizenship side, but very connected to media literacy because of the constructed nature of the world we live in online.

We've been doing work recently with Creative Future and other groups, around creativity and copyright. And to me, the most important lesson there is, no eighth grader cares or wants to learn about copyright law or fair use. And what I like about our curriculum is that it drills down to much more core issues. For example, let's start with appreciating that you as a user, create things online. You mash things. You make videos, you tweet, you do lots of things. And you like doing it, and that's great. And you should also appreciate that lots of other people create things online and you should share those things with respect, including respect for their rights as creators. If you made a great new video mashup, and you share it with your eighth grade classmates, you want them to respect and value that you created it. And that to me is a more topical construct for middle schoolers than copyright and fair use. But they're related issues. I think we get students to a better understanding about fair use when we help them appreciate that they are not just users, they are also creators. And so the more we help them, the more we encourage their own digital creativity, the more we help them recognize that they and everyone else are digital creators, and that everyone who creates things deserves some respect for that.

The additional lesson beyond that for media literacy is, "This news story you read was written by someone, this tweet about candidate X was written by someone."

TJ: Yes. The fact is that media are constructed by someone, that different people understand messages differently, and it's important to remember the whole idea of empathy for other people. With media literacy, we always say we have the questions, not the answers. We are about exploring relationships with media and with each other. And certainly, the creation part of media literacy is a big part of expressing who we are to others, and having others see us as human beings. And then we take those fundamental skills, those fundamental understanding that come from media literacy, and through those understandings we use media, and we create media, and we create in a context of being a citizen that has rules and laws and behavioral standards expected of us.

AS: Yes, and I'm optimistic that our digital world may make it easier to teach media literacy today, because today kids are growing up in a media-infused world. They're surrounded, as users and creators, by tools that enable them to create media. And it's hard to miss that now. So I think it's easier for teachers to see the importance of it, and especially in the K-12 realm, one of the challenges for every educator is finding the time to teach new topics.

If this is not a core subject, like Math or English, it may not become a front burner priority. But increasingly, you see more teachers in K-12 -- especially middle school and high school -- appreciate that media literacy and digital citizenship are an essential part of preparing their students to be the workers, the voters, the employers, the citizens of our increasingly digital world ahead of them. We are in a gnashing right now over whether the MEDIA, in capital letters, did a good job covering this political campaign, and to me one of the most lasting lessons is that the voters, the readers, the users all need to do a better job in every election and on every issue, of doing their own analysis of what's reliable information, of what sources they trust, of what questions are important, of what issues should they use to base their vote? Relying on the media to answer those questions for you is a very outdated construct, and a lot of people are now realizing that.

One of the other issues, besides my own history major, that I've always tied back to in the debates around media literacy is the old story about, "Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus".

Most people know that story because of the wonderful finish to it, which is the editor of the newspaper writing a letter about why we should believe in Santa Claus. But the root question of that story is that a young girl asked her father whether there's a Santa Claus, and her father said, "Write the New York Sun because if you read it in the Sun, you know it's true". And that's no longer a reality for us. That New York Sun is gone, quite literally. When I was in school, you would go the Encyclopedia Britannica or a similar world book source, and we don't have that one source anymore. And it's not coming back – but many people still yearn for this simpler era. We need to give everyone the tools and the training, and the preparation they need to be discerning and thoughtful, to do their own analysis, to trust and verify, and to find multiple sources because also it builds on that very root level of, "Whatever you read, whatever videos you watch, whatever ads you see -- they were created by other human beings who may have opinions or biases or may just have made a mistake, because they are human."

TJ: Yes, there is this relationship between digital citizenship and media literacy that's very strong. And media literacy is foundational to digital citizenship and you can't have one without the other. They go hand in hand and yet though you must be media literate to be a good digital citizen, literacy stands alone because it can be applied to lots of other subjects, lots of other topics. And so in that sense, media literacy is foundational because it carries across all subjects, and all topics. Digital citizenship in the US probably means something different than digital citizenship in China or digital citizenship in Africa. And so digital citizenship is driven more by a context and a culture, or nationality, and media literacy is more of a universal skill set, a mindset that crosses boundaries.

AS: Yes, digital citizenship is a matter of customs and mores, and regulations and expectations that are different between countries but also different between communities and between families. And when we try to help families and teachers teach digital citizenship, it's very much with that in mind, that "Here are some outlines of what you can do but especially for parents, you decide what the rules are." One of the rubrics we've always used in talking about the challenge of digital

citizenship has always been that it's tough for parents or teachers to teach kids about what to do online because the adults understand the rules, but the kids understand the tools.

The kids have a better construct of how the tools work. It's harder for teachers and parents to say, "Hey, here's some basic guidelines", when they don't even understand what media and platforms and apps and devices their kids are using. When you have to ask your kid how to reprogram your own phone, it's a little tougher for you as a parent or a teacher to make sure they're living according to the guidelines that you tried to outline for them.

But in the larger sense, media literacy has more fundamental principles. Journalism may be an increasingly difficult place to build a career, but journalism skills are still something that everyone should be learning because these skills involve fundamental questions of media literacy. How do you decide what is reliable information? Where do you go to get it? And what do you share? And that sharing can be a question about appropriateness or fairness, or, "Is this a nice thing to do?" But it can also be a question of, "Is this reliable information or are you spreading rumors?" Or is it even legal?

The legal issues are extremely important, but especially in our work with K-12, I wouldn't like to walk into a middle school classroom and say, "All right, today we're going to talk about copyright law." But I would like to walk into a classroom and say, "Today, we're going to talk about being fair and respectful towards other people's creations online, in the same way you would want them to respect what you create online." It doesn't mean you can't share it, it doesn't mean you can't use it in your own schoolwork, but it means you need to respect and acknowledge another source, and it means you need to be careful about which sources you choose to acknowledge.

When you work with middle schoolers and younger kids, you quickly see that rules are one thing that we worry about, but we also need to worry about the forbidden fruit. If you tell kids not to do something, that often becomes the thing they're most interested in doing. And so it's more important, and again I'm always careful, and as an organization we're always careful not to say to parents, "Here is the exact rule you should set. You should set rules with your kids, but you as the parent, know best about what those rules should be, reflecting on your own personal beliefs and your own community principles and the laws in your country, you make that call. But what's also really important is to communicate those ideas and that guidance that you provide to your kids in a way that will be effective, in a way that they will listen."

And so telling kids, "Don't do that, it's against the law." Well that might go right past their ears. Or, "Don't do that because I said so." Parents know that works for very young kids. But as their kids get older, parents learn that they have to be a little more descriptive and savvy about how they communicate rules and guidance to their kids. Just saying no isn't going to be enough as kids get older and more inquisitive and curious in the way that we want them to be, as future adults.

For schools and teachers, it's important to have a broad, holistic, connected approach to these digital citizenship and media literacy issues. Meaning, an approach that helps you look at all the

different issues that can be connected when you are teaching digital citizenship, which include issues around privacy and balance but also issues around ethics and empathy and your own relationships in the world -- with your classmates, with your parents, with everyone. It can get challenging for teachers because they sometimes get handed the one immediate topic that we now need to teach our students about fake news, or about bullying. And each of those issues are important.

But as I said at the beginning, those issues are helpful to our larger cause because those immediate issues remind teachers and parents of why overall digital citizenship education is essential. The topical, immediate issues are not a bad thing, but the longer term solutions for engaging children in these questions about digital citizenship and helping them really think about not only the guidance that their parents and teachers give them but the rules and codes of conduct that they set for themselves -- those are longer conversations. Those are not a one-off lesson about bullying. The real value we get is when we help our students and our kids think more broadly: "This is your online world and you have a role in shaping it. This wasn't handed to you by company X. We all have a role in shaping it." And so, the most important question you really want to ask yourself as a student, as a user, as a teacher is, what kind of online world do you want?

We are in a networked world, as learners and as adults, we're engaged in lifelong learning. But it's not just a matter of learning new skills. It is a matter of continuing to update these skills, and following the Golden Rule along the way.

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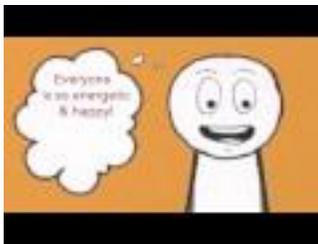


Elizabeth Thoman

(June 18, 1943 - December 22, 2016)

Elizabeth Thoman was a media literacy pioneer and visionary. She founded the Center for Media Literacy in 1989. A memorial will take place on February 12, 2017 in Los Angeles, CA. For more information, please check the CML web site Announcements page or Facebook.

Read the [Voices of Media Literacy](#) interview with Elizabeth Thoman.



What is Media Literacy? New Video Available

CML and Media Literacy Now are pleased to offer a new video for media literacy advocacy. The video explains media literacy as the key to unlocking critical thinking toward media. This project is dedicated to the memory of Elizabeth Thoman, with thanks to Transformative Culture Project for creative guidance.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rbW1rTcKXPA>

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://consortiumformedia literacy.org>

Media Literacy Resources

Media Literacy Resources on “fake news”:

California Lawmakers Propose Bills: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jan/12/california-lawmakers-propose-bills-to-teach-students-to-identify-fake-news>

**This article contains a few inaccuracies about CML. The Consortium for Media Literacy is a non-profit; the Center for Media Literacy is not. Also, the correct terminology is Core Concepts and Key Questions.*

Getting Literal About Media Literacy K12:

<https://www.districtadministration.com/article/getting-literal-about-media-literacy-k12>

How to combat fake news: <http://www.attn.com/stories/13234/how-people-can-combat-fake-news>

Fake news isn't just an internet problem, it's a classroom crisis:

<http://laschoolreport.com/fake-news-isnt-just-an-internet-problem-its-a-classroom-crisis-a-new-push-for-media-literacy/>

Additional Resources:

[CML web site](#) The Center for Media Literacy offers extensive research, teacher resources, and classroom activities.

[CML's YouTube channel](#) contains a variety of videos including the new *What is Media Literacy?*

[GAPMIL](#) -- Global Alliance for Partnerships in Media Information Literacy (UNESCO) creates partnerships around the world to improve media literacy education. The newly formed North American Chapter is co-chaired by Michael Hoechsmann, Lakehead University, Orillia, Canada and CML's Tessa Jolls.

[Media Literacy Now](#) – Guidance and information for media literacy advocacy and legislation throughout the U.S.

[NAMLE](#) – National Association for Media Literacy Education is a national organization dedicated to media literacy as a basic life skill for the 21st century.

Med!aLit Moments

Telling Fact from Fiction

A recent Stanford University study of more than 7,000 middle school students has documented that most students have trouble telling fact from fiction, whether they are reading online or not. To media literacy teachers, this is no surprise: students are not taught the foundational skills of media literacy from an early age, even though in this world of online instant access to all media, these skills are essential. (For the details of the study: <https://sheg.stanford.edu/upload/V3LessonPlans/Executive%20Summary%202011.21.16.pdf>)

Help your students learn the difference between fact and opinion, and inference and evidence.

AHA!: Everyone has an opinion and sometimes it's presented as fact!

Grade Level: 5-7

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

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

Key Question #5: Why is this message being sent?

Core Concept #5: Most media messages are created for profit and/or power.

Materials: Fact vs. Opinion worksheet available to print [here](#), or make your own. Be sure to cover the answers at the bottom of the worksheet. Process skills associated with Close Analysis of media texts provides another avenue for teaching this topic. Find out more in *Literacy for the 21st Century* (<http://www.medialit.org/literacy-21st-century>).

Activity: Use an on-line news source or even an Instagram photo with a caption to show students how news is captured and circulated every day. Then give them the Fact-Opinion Worksheet to fill out individually. Work with the students to see how they responded and to help them understand what constitutes fact vs. opinion and evidence vs. inference.

Here are some helpful definitions:

Fact: something known with certainty that can be objectively verified. A journalist covering a news story is sent out to gather facts – who, what, where, when. (The question of *why?* is often based on opinion). Facts are descriptive in nature and can be supported by evidence.

Opinion: a belief or conclusion not necessarily substantiated by positive knowledge or proof. This is where the person relaying the story guesses, speculates, or fabricates the details about what happened by interjecting his or her own interpretations or judgments.

Evidence: tends to prove or disprove something; ground for belief; proof.

Assumption: the belief that something is true and taken for granted without proof.

Inference: arriving at a conclusion based on assumption.

Denotation: a direct, specific meaning.

Connotation: a meaning suggested by a word or an expression in addition to its exact meaning.

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, ©2002-2016, Center for Media Literacy, <http://www.medialit.com>