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*In 2006 Henry Jenkins published a white paper identifying the challenges and opportunities for media literacy in our 21<sup>st</sup> century media culture. Since then, new ideas, new technologies, and new names have emerged bringing with them misunderstandings and rifts among educators. It's time to reflect on where we've been and where we are now.*

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## Theme: What's in a Name?

In this issue of *Connections*, we are excited to publish Part 1 of a blog discussion between Henry Jenkins, USC Annenberg Innovation Lab, and Tessa Jolls, CML, where they explore the importance of calling media literacy--*media literacy*--and whether it matters if we call it by any other name.

Henry Jenkins is Provost's Professor of Communication, Journalism, and Cinematic Arts at the University of Southern California. He arrived at USC in Fall 2009 after spending the past decade as the Director of the MIT Comparative Media Studies Program and the Peter de Florez Professor of Humanities. He is the author and/or editor of twelve books on various aspects of media and popular culture.

In 2006 Jenkins published a white paper, *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century* (sponsored by MacArthur Foundation), which was, and still is, a profound and significant examination of the new media emerging from the technology advances of our time, and a document that contributed great advances to understanding media literacy skills needed in our society.

But, today, there seem to be rifts and mutual misunderstandings between media literacy advocates who have long practiced in the field and newer researchers who have entered the field through the Digital Media and Learning tradition.

It's possible that part of the friction comes simply from the words "new media literacies." By definition, what is not new is now old — and in our society, being "old" is often considered neither cutting edge nor fashionable nor relevant. But rather than widening the rifts, it is our hope in bringing this conversation to a broad audience, that it will help us all to see the benefits of acknowledging our commonality and to leverage it to gain traction in the bigger world of education. Thankfully, the fear surrounding using the internet, the need for tools of discernment — and the genuine opportunities that the internet and social media present to empower people — have helped instill in the public more of a sense of urgency that has propelled renewed interest in media literacy education. Now is an excellent time to reflect and to see "where we are now" and where we might go.

We've also included a must-read report on K-12 educational effectiveness recently released by the US Chamber of Commerce, and a MediaLit Moments activity to try in the classroom.

## Research Highlights

### Henry Jenkins and Tessa Jolls on the meaning of *Media Literacy* and the need for a strong coalition of advocates regardless of the name

This conversation first appeared on Henry Jenkins' blog [Confessions of an Aca-Fan](#).

**Henry:** When I and other researchers from MIT wrote the 2006 white paper, [Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century](#), we were very aware of building on the foundations of the Media Literacy movement as it had taken shape in North America over the prior several decades. We made a number of gestures across the paper, which were intended to pay tribute to what had been accomplished, to signal the continuities as well as differences to our vision for the "new media literacies." For example, early in the paper, we emphasized that the newer skills and competencies we were identifying built on the foundation of traditional print-based literacies, core research skills, core technical skills, and media literacies. We wrote, "As media literacy advocates have claimed during the past several decades, students also must acquire a basic understanding of the ways media representations structure our perceptions of the world; the economic and cultural contexts within which mass media is produced and circulated; the motives and goals that shape the media they consume; and alternative practices that operate outside the commercial mainstream...What we are calling here the new media literacies should be taken as an expansion of, rather than a substitution for, the mass media literacies." (20). Later, in the document, we do challenge whether some of the core frameworks of the media literacy movement have been adequately framed to acknowledge and take account of instances where young people are themselves producing and circulating media, rather than consuming media produced by others, but these were intended as fairly local critiques in recognition of the need to continually reappraise and reframe our tools to reflect new developments and new contexts. This same passage flags what we saw as some of the core virtues of those same conceptual frameworks: "There is much to praise in these questions: they understand media as operating within a social and cultural context; they recognize that what we take from a message is different from what the author intended; they focus on interpretation and context as well as motivation; they are not tied up with a language of victimization...One of the biggest contributions of the media literacy movement has been this focus on inquiry, identifying key questions that can be asked of a broad range of different media forms and experiences." (59)

If we flash forward to the current moment, it seems that there remain many mutual misunderstandings between advocates for media literacy (who come from these rich traditions) and newer researchers who have entered the field through the Digital Media and Learning tradition.

**Tessa:** I remember well the excitement that I felt when you published your white paper in 2006 (*Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st*

Century) -- it was (and is!) a profound and significant examination of the new media emerging from the technology advances of our time, and a document that contributed great advances to understanding media literacy skills needed in our society. Personally, I've always embraced your work because I see the added-value to the field and how it builds upon and is compatible with what has come before, and I've been puzzled as to why there seem to be rifts when it is far more beneficial to acknowledge our commonality and to leverage it to gain traction in the bigger world of education.

I agree that there are mutual misunderstandings between media literacy advocates who have long practiced in the field and newer researchers who have entered the field through the Digital Media and Learning tradition. BUT because media literacy education has been ignored and neglected in schools through the years, there was no foundation laid for why media literacy is important, for its foundational concepts and for how to deliver the pedagogy (more on the foundation needed later). There were few if any troops to call on to be able to deliver media literacy education — very few had been taught, and no one could then teach it on the mass scale that is needed. And efforts to penetrate the education system in the U.S. meet with resistance since the system itself is based on a 20th century approach emphasizing content knowledge over process skills and a factory model that is incompatible with the collaborative networks and new curricular approaches needed today.

One response to the frustrations of dealing with the education system was — and is — to put technology in the hands of the youth and have faith that they will figure it all out. Using the technology approach, the iPhone is the “school” and anyone who uses it adeptly is the master and anyone over 30 is, well, handicapped at best. New technologies enable this approach because now, hardware and software are available and production has been democratized — *everyone* is a producer, a collaborator, a distributor and a participant. While experiential and project-based learning is truly exciting and an important component of media literacy, it is not synonymous because the outcome of the technology approach is often limited to technical proficiency without critical autonomy. Whether using an iPad, a pencil or a videocam, pressing the right buttons is important but not enough! This is where many media literacy advocates, including myself, feel that the train has left the station because some researchers, educators and parents, too, think that just learning to use the technology is enough (they probably don't know about or have access to alternatives) and they pursue technology projects with no credible media literacy components.

**Henry:** MacArthur Foundation (Digital Media & Learning Initiative) was pretty committed to the phrase, New Media Literacies, so we worked hard to try to figure out what kind of meaning to attach to it. I did want to signal continuities with the Media Literacy movement, so it did not seem altogether a problematic term, but I was also worried about the connotations you describe here. This is one reason why I was so explicit that we were not leaving behind traditional literacies, media literacy, research skills, or technical skills, but that what we were describing were an added layer or an extension of each that now needed to be factored into our consideration of what an ideal curriculum looked like. I did not want to imply that these

skills were entirely new -- many were things we should have and some of us had been teaching all along -- nor were they exclusively about new media per se. We've always insisted that these were not technical skills but rather social skills and cultural competencies, and that these were things that can be taught in low tech or no tech ways (and should be, rather than waiting for low income schools to catch up in terms of their technical infrastructure before introducing these literacies into the curriculum.) Despite having spent much of my career at MIT, I have worked hard to avoid any and all forms of technological determinism.

Still, there's some rhetorical power to attaching yourself to the digital revolution rhetoric (as well as many pitfalls) insofar as it provides some urgency to the message, but ultimately I frame these skills in relation to the idea of a participatory culture rather than in terms of digital change. This is also why I have had reservations all along about the phrase, Digital Media and Learning, since it implies that we are interested only or exclusively in digital media, and that has never been my focus. Keep in mind both that I wrote the white paper in the wake of writing *Convergence Culture*, which was all about "Where old and new media collide," and that it emerged from the context of the Comparative Media Studies program, which studied the interplay across media. We find that when we do workshops for teachers and students, they often anticipate that technologies are going to be much more central to our work than they are. Our first task is always to achieve that shift from a focus on technologies to a focus on culture.

And like you, I share concern that in many cases, we are now bringing technologies into the classroom as if doing so would substitute for a more comprehensive approach to media literacy. As Liz Losh notes in her recent book, the focus on technology turns media education into something that can be sold -- like getting whole school districts to buy iPads -- and can be purchased from the school budget, rather than something which as the white paper suggests, should require a fundamental paradigm shift in the ways we teach all school subjects.

That said, I got into some trouble with the original white paper in reducing the rich kinds of conceptual models that surround, say, the Computer Club House movement to purely technical skills comparable to penmanship. Most of the work which gets presented at the Digital Media Literacy (DML) conference is about the fusion of hands-on technical processes, whether tied to hacking, games-based learning, the Maker movement, etc., with rich conceptual frameworks which are intended to allow people to understand at a deeper level how the constraints and affordances of digital media impact the world around us. To me, this is a kind of media literacy, though less tied to notions of representation or messaging than previous kinds of media literacy work. If one does not displace the other, they certainly can co-exist within a more comprehensive model which considers the nature of platforms and programming alongside the questions about who produces which representations for which audiences with which motives.

In many ways, what we were trying to do with the white paper was to build a coalition which would include people interested in engaging with new media platforms and practices, people committed to promoting media literacy, and teachers seeking new ways to animate the teaching of their disciplines. Where our work has been successful, we have brought together these interests. Such an approach has tended as you suggest here to pull media literacy advocates into more active engagement with notions of media change and new technologies, but it also has the intent to draw people who want to teach using new technology to confront the participation gap, the transparency issues, and the ethical challenges we identify in the white paper and through doing so, to pull media literacy more actively into their teaching practice.

**Tessa:** Henry, I applaud your action and know that your intentions are the absolute best. Most importantly, we agree on the primary goal of media literacy education: as you said, media literacy requires a fundamental paradigm shift in ways to teach *all* subjects. Media literacy education— whether it is high tech or low tech — primarily concerns itself with *teaching and learning the conceptual underpinnings beneath contextualizing, acquiring and applying content knowledge*. Learners gain content knowledge *through* using their media literacy skills — and these skills are applicable to *any* content any time, any where on a lifelong basis. Sometimes this process has little or nothing to do with technology, although I will note that access to technology in the U.S. is widespread: in our experience at CML, in the poorest communities in the U.S., cell phones and applications like video games proliferate, but these technologies are frequently barred in the classroom.

This changed education paradigm is a radical shift in cultural and education systems where formal learning worldwide has traditionally been confined to content silos whose subject matter is warehoused in physical textbooks and dumped into students' heads. Since these traditions have dominated since Gutenberg's invention of the press, they are rooted deeply in our culture. "Mastery" is no longer the goal for education; constant improvement on a continuum of learning is what we are seeking, while recognizing that some will inevitably be more skilled than others in various domains. As Len Masterman, a professor from the University of Nottingham and a media literacy visionary, said his Eighteen Basic Principles in 1989, "...you can teach about the media most effectively, not through a content-centered approach, but through the application of a conceptual framework which can help pupils to make sense of any media text (this includes media texts created by users and software "texts"). And that applies every bit as much to the new digitized technologies as it did to the old mass media...The acid test of whether a media course has been successful resides in students' ability to respond critically to media texts they will encounter (or create) in the future. Media education is nothing if it is not an education for life."

We at CML like to say that thanks to technology, the content is infinitely variable, plentiful and available, but that the media literacy process skills of "learning how to learn" and to be critically autonomous are the constants that learners need to practice and employ and constantly improve — and because of the lack of understanding and training of both teachers

and learners, these skills are scarce. It is going to take more than a village to institutionalize media literacy education. Policy initiatives, coalitions, professional associations, researchers etc. will all play a vital part in realizing this global imperative.

Which brings me to the point that being media literate, undertaking research and development, teaching media literacy, and institutionalizing media literacy are widely divergent roles which require various degrees of media literacy knowledge and skills. Who needs what knowledge when, and for what purpose? Masterman noted that ...”media are symbolic sign systems that must be decoded (and encoded). The central unifying concept of media literacy is that of representation (what is represented through media to us and what we represent to others through media).” Researchers who explore the vanguard of media literacy — such as you and many of those who are part of the DML community — may have a different goal for media literacy education than preschool teachers, and yet each is in the business of sharing knowledge about media literacy and helping youth and adults to understand and be able to describe and navigate symbolic media systems — whether these systems are technology-based or not. I do not see conflict — I see coalescence. Common understanding fuels coalition-building — which is highly desirable and needed!

To grow media literacy education at the pre-K-12 level, we need to have pedagogy that can be replicated, measured and scaled. Only then will media literacy be common knowledge rather than privileged information. Some of the basic components for achieving this goal have already been developed in ways that fit with new curricular approaches — highly encouraging. And in the meanwhile, it is also encouraging to note that media literacy education has survived through the grassroots for many years, because some early adopters recognized its importance and refused to abandon their first-hand experience with its benefits and promise (anyone who is interested in this evolution may want to check out CML’s [Voices of Media Literacy Project](#), which features 20 media literacy pioneers active prior to 1990). Yet in spite of these past efforts, we are at the beginning of the beginning, although Marieli Rowe, president of the National Telemedia Council and I have joked for years that “media literacy is just around the corner.” So far it’s been a very long block to walk!!

**Henry:** There's no question in my mind that the work we are doing today would not be possible without the work of the kind of media literacy pioneers you have been documenting and it is an enormous service to capture those voices and their memories of the early days of the media literacy movement while it is still possible to do so. I think there has been a tendency for those people who have jumped into this space in the wake of the MacArthur Digital Media and Learning initiatives to forget this history, to see these projects as a new beginning, and as a consequence, we are losing much wisdom, not to mention the opportunity to forge a stronger alliance with those veterans who have much experience in the field of this struggle. This is why I have made a point of remaining connected to NAMLE and serving on the editorial board of the Journal of Media Literacy to make sure those links remain strong.

Once we wrote the white paper and turned our attention to developing our own curricular resources, our first major project, which became the book, *Reading in a Participatory Culture*, sought to bridge between the literary practices of the 19th century (those which gave rise to Moby-Dick) and today's remix practices, whether those associated with hip hop or digital media; we wanted to help teachers to understand the differences between plagiarism, fair use, and remix, and we wanted students to think not only critically but also creatively about the many different kinds of texts they encountered in their everyday lives as readers and writers within contemporary culture. Our goal was not about promoting new media per se; we wrote that we hoped to raise a generation which had a mouse in one hand and a book in another. And the approach we took was comparative to its core, seeking to identify connections across media as well as differences.

You are right to say that technologies are becoming more widely available (and thus, one case for teaching media literacy is that we need to help young people think critically about tools and practices that are very much part of their everyday environments.) We certainly still are finding cases where young people lack access to these technologies -- or meaningful access -- outside the classroom, so that having twenty minutes of restricted access in a public library does not equal the unlimited, anywhere-anytime access enjoyed by other youth. But, we are also finding other inequalities in access to skills and knowledge, mentorship, networks, etc. which result in gross inequalities of opportunity between different youth -- this is what we called in the original report, the Participation Gap, and this also is why it is so vital to incorporate media literacy experiences, including experiences working with new media technologies, into every institution that touches young people's lives, but especially through schools. MacArthur's original focus was on spaces of informal learning, which was an important first step, but increasingly, the DML folks are focused on "connected learning," which centers on building a more fluid set of relations between home, out of school, and in school practices. All of this is why I have shifted from talking about "a participatory culture" to "a more participatory culture" to emphasize the work which still needs to be done in insuring equity of opportunity.



### CML Hosts Korean Press Foundation

CML hosted a delegation of the Korean Press Foundation (KPF), including six teachers, in a three day media literacy training in Los Angeles, California. The September training included an introduction to CML's Questions/TIPS (Q/TIPS) framework of Key Questions and Core Concepts as well as a visit to Mark Twain Elementary School in Lawndale, CA, where Cristina Terrazas and her class demonstrated a critical media literacy lesson in action, meeting Common Core standards and using CML's framework.

The KPF delegation also went to the Museum of Tolerance, where they visited exhibits that concentrate on propaganda and use of media.

The visiting delegation included: Sim Ha Yeong and Kim Jae Wook from the KPF, as well as Song Jungsun, Suwon Academy of World Languages; Park Nam Bum, Cheonan Ssangyong High School; Park Jae Kon, Hwarang Elementary School; Lim Yoon Hee, Changdeok Girls Middle School; Cho Mi Ok, Bitgaram Middle School; and Ha Eun Kyung, Ministry of Education.

A Korean translation of the Q/TIPS framework and an example of a MediaLit Moment are available [here](#).

**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 communications that demonstrate scientifically that media literacy is an effective intervention strategy in addressing critical issues for youth. <http://consortiumformedia literacy.org>

## Resources for Media Literacy

### Leaders & Laggards – A detailed report on K-12 education in the U.S.

#### **A State-by-State Report Card on K-12 Educational Effectiveness**

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This report grades each state in the following 11 areas in an effort to examine state policy and performance across the country: Academic Achievement, Academic Achievement Low-Income Minority, Return on Investment, Truth in Advertising: Student Proficiency, Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Teacher Force, Parental Options, Data Quality, Technology, International Competitiveness, and Fiscal Responsibility.

*Report Introduction: In our increasingly globalized world, an effective, first-class education is more and more critical. For businesses to compete globally and for the U.S. economy to continue to grow, access to high-quality talent and a skilled workforce is essential. While the numerous benefits of an educated society are well documented—higher earnings, reduced inequality, and improved health and well-being, to name just a few—solutions to the challenges facing business will be solved by those countries that can access the best and brightest human capital and thereby gain a competitive advantage. Failure to compete will not only exacerbate unemployment, poverty, and inequality, but it will put the nation at risk of long-term economic stagnation. As countless data have shown, better educational opportunities improve one’s quality of life and potential for economic success. Over the course of his or her lifetime, a high school graduate can expect to make almost \$500,000 more than a high school dropout, and a college graduate can expect to make about \$800,000 more than a college dropout.*

*Unfortunately, numerous indicators outline America’s challenges in delivering a high-quality education for all students. Comparisons of even our most privileged students to their international peers place U.S. students in the middle of the pack. The testing company ACT reports that as few as 25% of students taking the ACT college admissions test produce college-ready scores in all four tested subjects (English, mathematics, reading, and science). Looking at our most disadvantaged students, the results are downright shocking. In some states, high school graduation rates for African-American and Hispanic students are less than 60%. No society or economy can afford for so many of its students to be left behind.*

*Business leaders have a clear stake in the nation’s educational future. While America’s K–12 education system is found to be middling in international comparisons, our private sector is a world leader renowned for its innovation and productivity. A focus on higher standards, access to better data on student performance, a greater awareness of the need not just to spend more money but to spend it wisely, and the growing consensus on improving digital learning opportunities to create 21st century schools were all wins for our K–12 system and will pay dividends in augmenting the skills and competitiveness of our workforce.*

In 2009 Leaders & Laggards published another report which focused on the states leading the way in educational innovation. That report can also be found on the Leaders & Laggards website <http://www.leadersandlaggards.org>

## MediaLit Moments

### What Does Your Digital Footprint Tell About You?

With every mouse-click, you leave behind a digital trail of what you do, where you go, and who you know online. Your digital trail creates a digital footprint of your online identity that increases in size every time you post, share, and search online. Your online identity can tell a lot about you.

*Ask students to follow their digital trail then reflect on what they find*

**AHA!** My digital footprint is different from who I am in real life!

**Grade Level:** 9-12

**Key Question #1 for Construction:** What am I authoring?

**Core Concept #1:** All media messages are constructed

**Materials:** Paper and student access to the Internet

**Activity:** Ask students to write down their user names for email, Twitter, Skype, etc. Then ask them to list their favorite web sites and social media sites. Who do they follow on Twitter? Which web sites do they visit? If they have a blog, ask them to write down the name of the blog.

Next, have students copy and paste their profile pictures, selfies, “About” pages with interests and likes listed, shared or tagged photos, and videos into one document named “my digital footprint.” Also include any recent tweets or instagram photos.

Ask students to reflect on what they see in their digital footprint. Start by asking the following questions: How might others view you? Does your online identity match who you are in real life? What does it say about how you view yourself? Is this how you want people to perceive you?

Remind students to take control of their online identities; they are the authors of their digital footprints. Suggest that they delete posts and/or photos that might cast a negative light on who they are and how they want to be perceived.

*This MediaLit Moment is based on an activity developed by Dr. Bobbie Eisenstock, California State University, Northridge.*

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, ©2002-2014, Center for Media Literacy, <http://www.medialit.com>