Toward a 4.0 Media Literacy: The Digital International Media Literacy E-Book Project

by Art Silverblatt, Sara Gabai & Yupa Saisanan Na Ayudhya

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Sara Gabai has been working since 2011 in the Communication and Information Unit of UNESCO Bangkok where she coordinated media and information literacy and media development research studies and projects in Southeast Asia. She is the Program Director of the Digital International Media Literacy eBook Project (DIMLE) founded by Dr. Art Silverblatt. Currently, Sara is the International Consultant of the Graduate Program M.A. Communication Arts for ASEAN and lecturer at Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, School of Communication Arts. Sara has earned her MSc in Gender, Media and Culture at the London School of Economics and Political Science, and has done extensive work in the field of media and communication both in Asia-Pacific and in Europe.

Yupa Saisanan Na Ayudhya is an advertising executive with 20 years experience, the former VP of J. Walter Thompson, Asia Pacific headquarter in Bangkok and the Client Service Director of JWT Europe in London. She has global marketing communication experience working with multinational clients such as Procter & Gamble and Unilever. Yupa combines considerable professional media experience with a solid theoretical understanding of the field of communications. Yupa's success in the field of International Media Communications earned her many International Advertising Awards. She is currently a Fellow in Residence of Webster University in the Center for International Education (CIE). She works with UNESCO, NGOs, IGOs, and universities around the world to promote media and information literacy education.

Media Literacy Philosophy and Approach

Media Literacy is a critical thinking skill that is applied to the source of most of our information: the channels of mass communications. Indeed, studies indicate that the study of media literacy enhances critical thinking skills, as applied to other disciplines. In that regard, Media Literacy is a discipline that focuses on process rather than product. We don't tell people what to think; instead, we teach them how to think.

Over the last year, we have focused on the development of the Digital International Media Literacy eBook Project (DIMLE), which is designed to promote international media literacy scholarship. Media literacy is an emerging area of study that has gone global at a furious rate. The media literacy con-
Media content is a “text” that provides insight into contemporary cultures. Media presentations reflect the attitudes, values, behaviors, preoccupations, patterns of thought, and myths that define a culture. And conversely, an understanding of a culture can furnish perspective into media presentations produced in that culture.

Media content has an impact on individuals and society. The media have transformed the way we think about the world, each other, and ourselves. In that regard, media presentations also reinforce and shape the attitudes, values, behaviors, preoccupations, and myths that define a culture.

Media literacy offers a range of quantitative and qualitative strategies that enable individuals to decipher the information they receive through the channels of mass communications. These critical approaches are analogous to a series of lenses, each of which provides fresh insight into media content. The effectiveness of a particular approach is dependent on the specific content, area of focus, or the culture in which the media presentation is produced. Consequently, becoming familiar with these critical approaches furnishes individuals with tools that make media content accessible and understandable.

Media literacy can foster an appreciation of media content. Media literacy should not merely serve as an opportunity to bash the media but also provide ways to enhance the audience’s enjoyment, understanding, and appreciation of media content.

At the same time, International Media Literacy furnishes perspective into cultures, countries, and regions. In The Geography of Thought, psychologist Richard E. Nisbett made the startling pronouncement that people from different cultures think differently. According to Nisbett, these habits of thought have been influenced through a culture’s distinctive social structures, such as a country’s hist-
Ethnocentrism The research, examples, quotes, and cultural references that support the major principles in the text are primarily derived from American media. Indeed, the entire chapter on Political Communications is devoted to the American political system.

Timeliness Because of new technologies and developments, examples, studies, and statistics that appear in the text quickly become outdated. Thus, in the rapidly evolving world of media, portions of the text, including certain chapters on “Digital Communications” and “U.S. Political Communications” soon lack relevance.

The International Online versions of this textbook are designed to address these problems. First, each online edition is co-authored by one or more international media literacy scholars, who translate the text into the appropriate language of their country (including the use of appropriate terminology). These scholars also furnish culturally relevant research, examples, quotes, and statistics. Secondly, the Online International editions contain a “wiki” feature that enables co-authors to update their editions on an ongoing basis.

Currently, there are approximately 40 international editions of the digital text. The network of international co-authors involved in the DIMLE project is made up of distinguished media literacy scholars, whose work continues to make a significant contribution to this emerging field of study. These co-authors are working on a voluntary basis, driven by their passion for media literacy education and their commitment to a theoretical framework that can be shared across cultures. Students will be able to download the eBooks for only $10.00 (U.S.), a significant savings over the inflated cost of print textbooks. However, this price may vary, depending on the relative standard of living characteristic of each country. In addition, because some developing countries may not have the requisite Information Communication Technology (ICT) and Internet facilities, the online editions may also appear in print form. We invite co-authors from countries that are
torical, political, economic, religious, legal—and media systems.2

If, indeed, the thought process characteristic of people in different cultures varies dramatically, then it follows that:

• People from different cultures may construct media messages differently.

• People from different cultures may interpret media messages differently.

• Certain media literacy strategies may work more effectively in some cultures than others.

• Media literacy education may vary in different cultures.

• Understanding the distinctive thought pattern of a culture can provide insight into its media presentations.

• By extension, a culture’s media presentations can furnish perspective into its distinctive thought patterns.

• Further, analyzing the “habits of thought” in media presentations can provide insight into cultures in transition from one stage of cultural sensibility to another.

Currently...

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One of the major impediments to global media literacy education is the lack of useful educational materials suitable for an international audience. This digital text is based on the U.S. print textbook, Media Literacy: Keys to Interpreting Media Literacy (Silverblatt), first published in 1995 and now going into its 4th edition. However, the print edition suffers from two limitations:

1. **Ethnocentrism**: The research, examples, quotes, and cultural references that support the major principles in the text are primarily derived from American media. Indeed, the entire chapter on Political Communications is devoted to the American political system.

2. **Timeliness**: Because of new technologies and developments, examples, studies, and statistics that appear in the text quickly become outdated. Thus, in the rapidly evolving world of media, portions of the text, including certain chapters on “Digital Communications” and “U.S. Political Communications” soon lack relevance.

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not yet represented in the project to join our team and co-author country’s edition of Media Literacy: Keys to Interpreting Media Literacy. (For more information, see our Website: www.DIMLE.org)

Changes Coming...

The Keys to Interpreting Media Messages offer a useful starting point for collaborative scholarship and student projects, including the exchange of media literacy examples, lesson plans, research, and best practices. For instance, one can imagine a project in which Palestinian and Israeli students, using their own editions of the text, examine the media coverage of the diplomatic efforts in the Middle East.

However, it must be stressed that this qualitative approach is not intended as a prescriptive model for media literacy education. Thus, the DIMLE project plans to introduce additional qualitative and quantitative approaches to the media literacy analysis. Co-author Art Silverblatt has been focusing attention on the development of qualitative approaches to the analysis of media and media presentations. These qualitative approaches include:

- Ideological
- Mythic
- Autobiographical
- Nonverbal
- Production
- Socratic Approach
- Dream Theory
- Culture Code
- Production Approach
- Memetic Approach
- Values Clarification Approach

Further, individual countries may favor particular approaches to media analysis. For example, while India often employs the “Gandhi approach” to teach media literacy, Thailand uses the “Buddhist Teaching approach” in the analysis of media presentations. Applying approaches commonly employed in one country to media presentations of another culture can, perhaps, provide perspective into that culture. In addition, it might be useful to consider whether media literacy approaches commonly employed in other countries might provide fresh insight into the media presentations of one’s own country of origin.

Vision for the next level of Media Literacy

The DIMLE project offers a media literacy framework that forms the foundation of a range of media literacy educational programs, including:

- Elementary and Secondary-level Courses
- Traditional and Online Undergraduate Curricula
- Traditional and Online Graduate Courses

In addition, DIMLE will provide an open portal, where educational resources on international media literacy may be accessed and shared freely by the general public. For instance, the DIMLE resources can be used in nontraditional educational arenas, such as audiences of public broadcasting, older adults, and young children.

DIMLE also hopes to provide a space where media literacy educators can engage in dialogue with policy makers, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and civil society. Some international organizations that promote and assess media literacy include The European Commission (EC), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Independent regulator and competition authority for the UK communications industries (Ofcom), the American Center for Media Literacy (CML), the National Association for Media Education (NAMLE), Canada’s Centre for Digital and Media Literacy, and the Australian Communications and Media Authority. *

ENDNOTES


Media Literacy Philosophy and Approach. Media Literacy is a critical thinking skill that is applied to the source of most of our information: the channels of mass communication. Toward a 4.0 Media Literacy: iYe Digital. International Media Literacy E-Book Project. by Art Silverblatt, Sara Gabai & Yupa Saisanan Na Ayudhya. The Journal of Media Literacy. 68. Media content is a text that provides insight. Digital literacy refers to an individual's ability to find, evaluate, and compose clear information through writing and other media on various digital platforms. Digital literacy is evaluated by an individual's grammar, composition, typing skills, and ability to produce text, images, audio, and designs using technology. The American Library Association (ALA) defines digital literacy as the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information.