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It's been a busy year for just about everyone involved in media literacy education. Our year-end review of media literacy activity indicates there is a lot happening abroad as well as good discussion taking place here at home.

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Who says teen movies don't matter? Hunger Games, Mockingjay Part 1 has actually been inspiring real-world protest on a number of issues around the world. In this MediaLit Moment, your middle and high school students will weigh in on the film's real-world implications, and reflect on the many differing audience reactions in response to it.

Theme: Media Literacy a Year in Review

What a Year!

If media literacy had a horoscope for 2014, the astrological advice might have been: look abroad for inspiration, and look inward for answers.

In April, in the pages of *Connections*, we reported on the work of a research team, led by Paolo Celot of the European Association of Viewer Interests, which created an assessment tool for measuring the progress of media literacy education in EU member states. In May, UNESCO and the European Commission, in cooperation with several partner organizations, launched the first European Media and Information Literacy Forum at UNESCO headquarters in Paris. In addition to discussion of methods for integrating media literacy into the curricula of all EU member states, the conference promoted the development of media literacy initiatives in non-formal settings. Unfortunately, few, if any conference papers have been released. The conference program is available at this time, as well as the first set of reports on the status of media literacy education in individual EU countries:

Forum blog post and conference program:

<http://www.europeanmedialiteracyforum.org/2014/03/launch-of-first-european-media-literacy.html>

Individual country reports: <http://www.translit.fr/>

However, one UNESCO document is available that is well worth perusing--the Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers. This is the blueprint document for training of media and information literacy teachers across the globe. It's well-organized and well-conceived, and includes a section of practice modules. Carolyn Wilson, of the Canadian AML, is one of the authors of this curriculum:

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0019/001929/192971e.pdf>

In May, the online *Russian-American Education Forum* published an article by CML President and CEO Tessa Jolls titled "The Global Media Literacy Imperative." From the abstract: "As nations compete to improve their standing on international assessments that focus primarily on students' acquisition of content knowledge, we must ask: are these assessments truly measuring what's important to citizens and their countries?" Jolls argues that students around the globe must learn the kinds of process skills embedded in media literacy education if they are to become competent citizens in the 21st century. The *Russian-American Education Forum* site includes a searchable archive of past issues:

<http://www.rus-ameeduforum.com/content/en/?&iid=18>

Media literacy and global citizenship was the theme for the March issue of *Connections*. The issue included an interview with Paul Mihailidis, who is the current Director of the Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change. Mihailidis characterized the Salzburg Academy in this way: "We're applying media literacy instruction with young journalists. We're not trying to put together a model of pedagogy for the K-12 classroom. The Academy was designed with the goal of creating a movement to build competent, engaged active media makers and

participants in their communities."

Mihailidis' account of the induction of participants in the program is nothing short of inspirational: "The minute they get there, they have to agree to let their boundaries and stereotypes and positions be challenged. . .We take them to the Dachau concentration camp. But before we do that, we have a night and narrative on conflict, war, rights and justice. What does something like that mean? What role do media play? How do we make sure that we do not let things like this happen again? They have to share and explain their understanding of these things. The students themselves might have been living in the middle of Baghdad when it was being bombed by the U.S. government. They might be from Chile, and descendants of people who had been oppressed by their government. They might be from China, and not used to discussing these issues. It becomes very intense and emotional, and you see students opening up. That's when the borders of inclusiveness start to come. . .We get students into teams that are geographically and culturally diverse. They'll be asked to produce case studies on LGBT rights, or youth rights. They all have to work together to tell that story and to use media to tell it. Their stereotypes about the issues have to be chopped down. They have to find a starting point to use the information in a way that they can show it to an audience. How can they talk about this issue around the world?"

At home, CML has been finalizing and releasing new curricula which have been years in the making. In March, CML released *Smoke Detectors: Deconstructing Tobacco Use in Media*. In this activity-driven curriculum, high school students investigate the placement of tobacco products in media of all kinds, and work with the Key Questions of Media Literacy to learn about bias in news media, the emotional vocabulary of advertising, and how to construct their own media messages. In September, CML released *Breakfast Epiphanies: Project-based learning through media literacy and nutrition*. This innovative, multidisciplinary unit helps middle school students develop critical awareness of the influence of marketing and branding on their food choices, and brings them together in project teams to create effective, entertaining online media products which reflect their learning of nutrition concepts.

In 2014, media literacy practitioners in North America made energetic contributions to a more full understanding of their field. On March 22nd, UCLA Center X convened a conference on social justice and the Common Core standards. Jeff Share, a Faculty Advisor in the Center X Teacher Education Program, and former CML Director of Regional Training, capitalized on opportunities for his students to showcase worked examples of media literacy curricula fulfilling the standards. In an interview for the May issue of *Connections*, Share argued that the Common Core English standards were intended to broaden the domain of literacy, and that the standards do provide broad support for media literacy educators to justify their work. Share argued, "Really it's about understanding pedagogy. When you teach media literacy, you go beyond, here's another lesson to do, and get students to think about the Key Questions and Core Concepts as tools that apply everywhere. Literacy is 'in' everything you're teaching. The Common Core 'gets' that. . .You can make sure that students are reading and writing, and not just with print, but with sound and multimedia."

The day before the Center X conference, media literacy scholars Belinha de Abreu and Paul Mihailidis held a research symposium at Fairfield University in Connecticut, supported in part by CML. In explaining the rationale for the symposium, De Abreu commented, "In our most recent book, *Media Literacy in Action*, Paul and I wanted to frame how media literacy education is coming from different vantage points. . .we were noticing that media literacy was being mentioned at a lot of different conferences--from the Internet safety people, from the FCC, from educators, from college and university faculty, from people at the MacArthur Digital Media and Learning events. So when the book was completed, Paul and I put together a conference for more discussion on the topic to foster the opening of a doorway to media literacy research." The symposium was in many ways a celebration of the heterogeneity of the field, but several of the contributors to *Media Literacy in Action*, including CML Director Tessa Jolls, provided an organizational frame for the symposium with an opening panel on "Media Literacy Research--What Is Needed?"

The June edition of *Connections*, which focuses on media literacy research, is undoubtedly the most resource-rich issue of the year. It includes Marilyn Cohen's perspectives on the path breaking AMLA research summit of 2007, a discussion of one of the most thorough surveys of media literacy research studies to date, an interview with veteran media literacy researcher Kathleen Tyner, and interview excerpts with researchers Bruce Pinkleton and Erica Austin at Washington State University. One of their more interesting conclusions? Media literacy research needs to address the interests and needs of students as research subjects, especially when they're the intended audience for media literacy interventions.

More recently, the December issue of NAMLE's *Journal of Media Literacy Education* published an article by Tessa Jolls and Carolyn Wilson titled "The Core Concepts: Fundamental to Media Literacy Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow." In this article, Jolls and Wilson curate the early history of the field, explaining the significance of the contributions of Marshall McLuhan, Len Masterman and other founding figures. The authors also demonstrate how the work of Elizabeth Thoman and Len Masterman anticipate the social and pedagogical innovations which have been taken up by Henry Jenkins and other contemporary practitioners in the field. And the authors affirm the achievements based on this foundation.

2014 has also been a year for bridging differences. Since the publication of Henry Jenkins' *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century* (2006) and the founding of Project New Media Literacies at USC, misunderstanding has crept into conversations between practitioners working with the Core Concepts of media literacy and researchers and practitioners exploring the pedagogical opportunities presented by the new media literacies framework.

In a much anticipated blog exchange published in the October and November issues of *Connections*, Henry Jenkins and Tessa Jolls reaffirmed the common ground between these respective approaches, and illuminated the few areas of difference that remain. In the first exchange, Jenkins re-iterated his view that instruction based on the core concepts remains

foundational to media literacy education. What's novel about the new media literacies approach? Jenkins argues that it's based on a conceptual framework intended "to allow people to understand at a deeper level how the constraints and affordances of digital media impact the world around us." Jenkins also sees these approaches as potentially complementary: "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" (*Connections*, October, p.5).

Jolls, in her responses, points out that practitioners in both groups will need to confront the challenges of an educational system indifferent or even hostile to the changes in *teaching and learning* that media literacy education requires ". . .the media literacy process skills of 'learning how to learn' and to be critically autonomous are the constants that learners need to practice. . .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" (*Connections*, October, p. 6-7).

In the next exchange, Jenkins pays homage to CML for trails already blazed: "I really appreciate the work CML does in translating research into awareness and action, in trying to build a more sustainable and scalable movement for media literacy. . .My team through the years has done a fair amount of applied work with educators, trying to get our materials out in the field. We've come to the same conclusion you have that media literacy is at least as much about rethinking education as it is about rethinking media" (*Connections*, November, p.5).

An interesting theoretical debate takes place in this second exchange as well. While Jenkins agrees that the principle of representation is essential to media literacy education, he wishes to emphasize process over product: "The disciplines which do the heavy lifting on media literacy education--especially language arts but also arts education--tend to focus heavily on texts. . .This focus on texts can lead us to think in terms of readers and writers/producers but not in terms of participants in an ongoing communication process. And this is a key reason why my vocabulary tends to place a greater emphasis on notions of participation than on notions of representation" (*Connections*, November, p.6).

For her part, Jolls observes that debate on the topic may well be inconclusive: ". . .participatory culture--whether we participate online or off--is both an input and outcome of construction/representation. . .There is a chicken-or-egg quality to the cultural issues and their intersection with media, but it can also be argued that an individual's mind and group culture itself are also constructions/representations." Jolls quickly turns her attention to more practical issues: ". . .we need boundaries and concepts that define and describe a specific field of inquiry" (*Connections*, November, p.7). It's worth noting that the June edition of *Connections* on media literacy research is in many ways concerned with this issue. The urgent need is for research which attests to the effectiveness of media literacy as a curricular intervention. If the

field of inquiry cannot be defined, it will be nearly impossible to compare differing curricula.

Though it's positioned at the beginning of the second exchange, the words of media literacy pioneer Barry Duncan are equally appropriate here: "You get all of these competing literacies, and that is not a bad thing. . .but there needs to be a way to bridge these and that has not successfully happened. Critical pedagogy has a lot to offer. . I want to see it having a major role in bringing the key ideas both of traditional media and new media--of bringing them together and making all of these things as meaningful in the curriculum. The so-called convergence and the culture of connectivity --all of the new directions -- all of that has to be reconciled with the traditional. And if we do a good job at that we will be successful" ([Voices of Media Literacy interview](#), 2010).

Research Highlights

EU Media Literacy Policy Revisited

In our April 2014 edition of *Connections*, we reported on the long process the European Union had undertaken to arrive at a method for reviewing the status of media literacy efforts in individual EU member states. On May 27th and 28th, UNESCO and the EU convened a media literacy forum in Paris covering the global progress of media and information literacy education, and the first media literacy reports from EU states.

While commentary and scholarship on this forum is forthcoming, a sampling of reports reveals some interesting trends. In general, the health of media literacy education improves as one moves from south to north among EU states. For example, in Bulgaria, media literacy is very rarely taught in schools; and yet two universities in Bulgaria offer degrees or teaching qualifications in media literacy pedagogy. According to the report, many educational NGOs in Bulgaria owe their existence to short- or medium-term projects. The authors assert that they "win projects but lack the required professional capacity and competency. Unfortunately, this is also true of many projects in the field of media education and media literacy" (23).

In Germany, coordination of media literacy education is complicated by the existence of autonomous media and educational authorities in the sixteen German *Länder*, and by the lack of binding legislative frameworks. A Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the German states have declared that media education should be required in all teacher training programs, but the provision has not been enforced. In 2010 to 2013, the Federal Ministry of Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth organized a multi-stakeholder project leading to a media literacy report intended to fulfill the 2007 EU reporting directive. None of its recommendations have been binding. In general, civil society organizations and state-level educational and media authorities have organized media literacy programs of high quality, but few, if any of these have been sustained on any long-term basis.

In the meanwhile, Finland appears to serve as a model for media literacy education in the European Union. While media literacy has never been a separate subject in Finnish schools, a dedicated agency, the National Audiovisual Institute, has recently been given the task of promoting, coordinating, and providing media literacy programs on a national scale. Media education policies are framed in the Basic Education Act, the Ministry of Education and Culture allocates funds for various media education providers, and several large non-governmental organizations support media literacy programs in schools and elsewhere. In addition, Finnish media literacy experts regularly provide support to relevant policy making bodies in the EU.

To peruse all the country reports, visit: www.translit.fr

Despite the emphasis of these reports on legal and administrative frameworks for media

literacy education, the 2009 EU research study which established criteria for assessment of media literacy levels focuses squarely on issues of individual competence, such as critical understanding of media, communicative ability, and citizen participation. The study includes a demonstration of the assessment tool with one member state. The full report is available at: http://ec.europa.eu/culture/library/studies/literacy-criteria-report_en.pdf

Two other developments are worth reporting. In the 2007 European Commission "Study on Current Trends and Approaches to Media Literacy," a short section of the report discusses media industry involvement in education, often through programs that analyze advertising, or the content of television programming. Activities promoting ties between film and education have become common, some with a focus on film literacy. This year, the EC launched a seven-year Creative Europe program intended to stimulate the development of a cross-cultural creative sector across the EU and abroad, with €1.46 billion in funding support. Film is high on the Creative Europe agenda, with offers of assistance for audience development "to foster film literacy."

Last, but certainly not least, Sonia Livingstone, David Buckingham and other UK media scholars have been charting the British Office of Communication's quiet but unmistakable drift away from its duty to promote media literacy. The small but growing body of literature suggests that Ofcom was not really equipped for the task of helping children and adults gain critical understanding of media. It was much more suited to the tasks of identifying safety risks online, and enforcing broadcast content standards. So why did the Communications Act of 2003 not assign this responsibility for education to the Department of Education?

In the end, Ofcom has reduced media literacy to a limited set of concerns, with a focus on protection from harm and access to technology. In a 2011 interview, Robin Blake, former Ofcom Head of Media Literacy, described this diminished agenda as "protecting kids from pedophiles, and getting grannies online" (Buckingham and Wallis, "Arming the Citizen-Consumer"). For this, and for links to other relevant articles, visit the London School of Economics Media Policy Blog at: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/mediapolicyproject/> "Media Literacy" can be found among a list of topics on the right hand side of the blog home page.



Charles Klotzer Media Literacy Award

In November, as part of the opening ceremonies for its Ninth Annual Media Literacy Week, Gateway Media Literacy Partners (GMLP) presented the Charles Klotzer Media Literacy Award to Tessa Jolls and the Consortium for Media Literacy.

Awardees included (from left to right): Media Professional: Lou "Fatha" Thimes Sr., given posthumously and accepted by his son; Institution: St Louis Beacon, now merged with St Louis Public Radio; Charles Klotzer International Media Literacy: Tessa Jolls, CML; Educator, journalist and professor: Avis Meyer, St Louis University; and Jessica Brown, GMLP President.

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>

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Recently Published Articles

Journal of Media Literacy Education (JMLE)
The Core Concepts: Fundamental to Media Literacy Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow By Tessa Jolls and Carolyn Wilson. Read the article <http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/jmle/>

Journal of Media Literacy (National Telemedia Council) publication *Research and Media Literacy: A Directed Path Through an Indirect Course* includes "Classroom Research: An Opportunity and a Challenge," by Tessa Jolls, Volume 61, Numbers 1&2, 2014, p. 53-56. With guest editor Belinha DeAbreau. The issue can be ordered through NTC at 1922 University Ave., Madison, WI 53726.

Resources for Media Literacy

Thank you for reading *Connections*! We appreciate your feedback and suggestions as we move into the new year. Feel free to [contact us](#).

You can find our comprehensive list of newsletters by visiting ConsortiumforMediaLiteracy.org. Our archive includes more than 60 issues on a wide variety of topics related to media literacy education in the US and around the world.

MediaLit Moments

My Hunger Games

When people or institutions start to look oppressive, many reach for an analogy to George Orwell's *1984*. But *The Hunger Games*? In fact, the latest installment from this teen fantasy franchise, *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay, Part 1*, has become much more than a conversation piece. Released on November 21st, 2014, just four days before the grand jury in Ferguson, Missouri decided not to issue an indictment in the case of Officer Darren Wilson's shooting of Michael Brown, *Mockingjay* has led to protests inspired by the film. Overnight, graffiti appeared on a Saint Louis monument with the words "If we burn, you will burn with us." In a video that has gone viral, a young woman sings the "Hanging Tree" song from the film, with an American flag in the background and lyrics altered to describe events in Missouri. In this MediaLit Moment, your middle and high school students will have the chance to develop a greater understanding of the power of social commentary in popular media, and greater awareness of different ways that audiences can be affected.

Ask students to discuss the emotional impact of Mockingjay, and how different audiences have reacted differently

AHA! A movie can emotionally stir and energize people to rally for a cause in real life!

Grade Level: 8-10

Key Question #4: What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?

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

Key Question #3: How might different people understand this message differently?

Core Concept #3: Different people understand the same media message differently

Materials: High-speed Internet access, LCD projector and screen. Story from NPR Weekend Edition Saturday, November 29th, 2014, "Finding Ferguson and Other news Headlines in 'Mockingjay'" Accessible at:

www.npr.org/2014/11/29/367362450/finding-ferguson-and-other-news-headlines-in-mockingjay

You may want to screen Laci Green's MTV video on the parallels between *Mockingjay* and events in Ferguson (readily available on YouTube). Much of it is excellent. You will need to be selective, however. Not all of the content will be appropriate for students. And, for discussion of audience differences, you'll find a ready supply of social media content--especially on Tumblr and the rest of the blogosphere--with differing interpretations of the political significance of the film. Tweets with the hashtag #MyHungerGames may also be of interest.

Activity: Ask students whether they've seen the film. For those who have, what events or conflicts in the film had the greatest emotional impact for them? Why?

Do they see the government oppression in the film reflected in real life? Make sure to reinforce classroom norms during this discussion, as students may well disagree with each other. Have students listen to part or all of the NPR story. Make sure to include the author's comment (in the final minute of the story) about political polarization in the U.S. and the tendency to "paint our enemies as larger than life."

Use the social media content to demonstrate the variety of audience reactions and responses to *Mockingjay*, and ask them to reflect on different responses among students in the room.

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>