

In This Issue...

Theme: Media Literacy and Change Management in Schools **02**

The Khan Academy has been winning accolades from some and has been excoriated by others, but the debate itself—how best to use technology in the classroom-- is at the heart of media literacy education.

Research Highlights **04**

In our research article, we discuss the essential roles that media librarians and principals play in managing change within the 21st century school.

CML News **07**

Twenty-one international visitors spent the day studying media literacy with CML's Tessa Jolls.

Media Literacy Resources **08**

We explain some of the most important implications of recent changes to Google's privacy policy, including implications for the company's brand image.

Med!aLit Moments **10**

In this MediaLit Moment, your high school students can experience the fun of writing like a tabloid journalist even as they learn how to think like a seasoned news editor at a major daily paper.

Theme: Media Literacy and Change Management in Schools

In our last issue, we highlighted the difference between the society we live in and the society which K-12 public schools seem to prepare students for. Many schools still treat information as if it were a scarce commodity, and transmission of information is at the center of the business of schooling. Yet, in a 21st century society saturated with information from multiple media, employers value employees who not only know how to access information, but also know how to analyze and evaluate what they find.

In this issue, we focus on the capacity of new media and communications technologies to change the direction of education in the 21st century. If the way students obtain information and learn to process it is fundamentally changed, then how should schools spend the time and resources they have available to them?

The Khan Academy is one good example of a new learning technology that is encouraging teachers to “flip” the activities traditionally conducted in the classroom. The Khan Academy had its start in 2004, when founder Salman Khan, then a hedge fund analyst in Boston, gave math tutorials to his younger cousin in New Orleans over the phone. After a few sessions she said she preferred that he post video tutorials on YouTube so she could see them whenever she wanted. Khan obliged. Within weeks, strangers were commenting on how helpful the tutorials had been for them. Today the Khan Academy boasts \$16.5 million in funding from Google, the Gates Foundation and other technology donors. By the end of 2011, the website had logged as many as four million unique visitors per month (Thompson, “How Khan Academy Is Changing the Rules of Education”; Lynley, “Khan Academy Had 4 Million Unique Visitors”).

In the beginning, the site included only the video lectures. With funding in hand, Khan and his support team created three hundred practice modules in mathematics which provided instant feedback to students. Next, the team added features which allowed teachers to view real-time assessment data in a variety of formats. In 2011, district administrators in the city of Los Altos, California, took interest in the enhanced site and integrated the Khan Academy learning system into their fifth and sixth grade mathematics curricula.

At Santa Rita Elementary, a school within the district, teacher Kami Thordarson replaces some of her lessons with Khan’s lectures, which students view at home. According to Thordarson, students often grapple with a subject and need someone to talk to when they’re doing homework—which they now do in class. In the classroom, Thordarson periodically monitors assessment data provided by the Khan Academy site at the same time that she assesses student progress in person. “I’m able to give specific, pinpointed help when needed” (Thompson, *op. cit.*). Moreover, students are able to spend time engaging in activities which stimulate creativity and problem-solving skills, such as playing SKUNK, a game based on

probability, or making a tile floor, which requires sophisticated skills for estimating sizes, shapes and numbers (*Economist*, “Flipping the Classroom”).

In some respects, short media literacy activities like the MediaLit Moments for this newsletter play the same role that the Khan lectures play for student learning. Both provide an introduction to a topic and initial practice. Both are springboards for quality classroom instruction. But the Key Questions and Core Concepts of media literacy are even more generative, as they can be immediately applied to the creation of original curricula.

The Khan Academy has attracted its fair share of criticism, some of it perceptive. Aren't these lectures just a fancy means for delivering the same content? They allow for self-pacing, but is there any way to modify them to meet the needs of individual students? Students are emotional, psychological and social creatures. Can the lectures really be so effective when students need human contact to motivate their learning?

The Khan Academy isn't necessarily 'the future of education,' as many of its proponents claim, but the debate over its merits is largely a good thing. One of the purposes of media literacy education is to encourage students, teachers and administrators alike to think about the most valuable uses of educational technologies. How can we use them to meet the needs of all students, and how can we utilize them to reduce time, opportunity and financial costs? In other words, how can we best deploy them to revolutionize educational institutions in the 21st century? The research article for this issue of *Connections* attempts to answer some of these questions. In this issue, we also offer a resources article which can help you understand the personal and political implications of the new Google privacy policy. And in our MediaLit Moment, your high school students have the chance to think like a tabloid news writer for a day, and learn something about the way all news is constructed.

References:

Economist, “Flipping the Classroom.” 17 September 2011: 30-32.

Lynley, Matt. “Khan Academy Had 4 Million Unique Visitors Last Month.”

www.businessinsider.com, 28 December 2011.

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Research Highlights

New Roles, New Spaces, New Learning in the 21st Century School

“Change Management,” the first part of the CML Trilogy: *A System for Learning AnyTime, AnyWhere*, argues that media librarians play a crucial role in the development of the 21st century school. School media librarians have typically enjoyed a comprehensive view of the schools they serve. With a full complement of digital tools at their disposal, they play an active role in almost every aspect of teaching and learning within the school. Among other things, they:

- help students understand the uses and purposes of electronic resources within the library according to relevant instructional standards
- participate in the drafting of those standards, and ensure the inclusion of standards for information, media, visual, digital and technological literacy
- collect assessment data for curricular programs, and consult with administrative staff in the development of student data systems
- co-ordinate instructional technology initiatives, ensuring that these fulfill specific educational goals
- collaborate with teachers to plan and implement curricula
- contribute to the professional development of teachers and administrators by assisting them with the organization of personal learning networks
- turn the library website into a virtual “third space” which invites the participation of all members of the school community

As electronic books continue to proliferate, educators and theorists alike are asking whether libraries will even remain relevant in the 21st century. Most librarians argue that the physical spaces of libraries should be re-purposed, and often use a domestic metaphor to illustrate the changes they envision. In the past, school libraries were much like grocery stores—they warehoused and stockpiled information “ingredients.” Today, the school library should be more like an information “kitchen.” In other words, it should be an energetic, inviting space for collaborative and project-based learning: “Even at home, a pristine living room isn’t used for studying. . . .When people want to study or create something or chat, they head for the kitchen. People use the kitchen table to spread out their work. . . .It’s a working environment that should have a lot of ‘appliances’ and space to research, make stuff, and consume a big ‘information meal’ (Sullivan, “Divine Design”).

Project-based learning in itself represents a tectonic shift in the use of information in educational settings. Rather than storing and recalling information, or applying it to hypothetical scenarios which have at best a tenuous connection with real human needs, students use information in authentic settings to address problems which impact both them and members of the wider community. Take, for example, the case of the EAST (Environmental

and Spatial Technology) initiative, an educational model focusing on student-driven service projects accomplished through teamwork and the use of digital technologies.

When Mansfield Elementary School, in Mansfield, Arkansas, had to cancel its field trip to Blanchard Springs Caverns because of rising gas prices, a group of Mansfield High School students rallied to find a way to bring the caverns to the kids. They filmed the caves, mapped them with a GPS device, interviewed the man who first explored the caves half a century ago, and created a virtual tour complete with animated cartoon guides. Other projects have included the creation of a “rain garden” to capture storm runoff and protect a local river from pollutants typically contained in runoff; and production of educational videos on recognizing and responding to the initial signs of stroke, copies of which were donated to a local hospital for re-distribution. The pedagogical methods of the EAST program have been validated by several formal research studies, and the program has been named as a model by the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor (www.eastproject.org; Vogel, “The East Initiative”).

In addition to highlighting the role of the media librarian, the *System for Learning* [e-book on Change Management](#) discusses the tasks which principals must take on in order to lead schools into the 21st century. First, they must articulate and promote a vision for change. They will need to help staff understand that the defining activity at schools is no longer the sharing of information, but the organization and management of people, information and technology to better serve the needs of students. Responding to criticism that technology-based curricula fail to increase student achievement, Natalie Tolbert, a Mansfield High teacher and EAST lab director, responds, “What makes EAST different is the engine running it. This engine includes teacher training, technical professional development, and two yearly conferences [one for lab facilitators and students] . . . If we didn’t have this dedication from the staff—the training and the administrative support, and everything else we need—the program wouldn’t work” (Vogel, “The East Initiative”).

If organization and management are at the heart of 21st century education, ensuring consistency of execution will be one of the main tasks for principals. Demonstration of feasibility and continuous evaluation of results will be equally important.

Finally, the responsibility for vision belongs not only to the principal, but to the school community as a whole. In an era in which technological change proceeds at an increasingly rapid rate, it pays for schools to articulate all their needs, and the potential solutions to them, even if those appear to be utopian or far off. In the “Tools for Change Management” section of the Trilogy, you’ll find a number of activities which can help your school initiate the visioning process.

References:

Jolls, Tessa. “Media Literacy: A System for Learning, Part I Change Management,” CML website www.medialit.org (2012).

Sullivan, Margaret. "Divine Design: How to Create the 21st Century Library of Your Dreams." *School Library Journal* 57.4 (April 2011): 26-32.

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Media Literacy Workshop for International Delegates

On March 5th in Santa Monica, California, CML President and CEO Tessa Jolls gave a media literacy workshop to 21 visitors from various countries including Bangladesh, Bhutan, Egypt, Estonia, Iraq, Mexico, Nepal, etc. The group was part of the International Visitor Leadership Program sponsored by the State Department. The program brought together people from all over the world to discuss issues on “Media Literacy: Promoting Civil Society Through New Media.”

Jolls was invited to lead a half-day workshop for the delegates where she introduced CML’s Five Key Questions and Core Concepts for media literacy and engaged the group in media literacy activities involving deconstruction and construction. The group travelled from coast to coast in the U.S. exploring the topic of media literacy.

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.

www.consortiumformedia literacy.org

Resources for Media Literacy

Teaching Tip: Librarians are an untapped resource for media literacy. Coordinate your classroom media literacy projects with your school librarian.

Google Releases New Privacy Policy

On March 1st, Google released a new privacy policy which has been greeted by reactions ranging from shrugs of the shoulder to pointed inquiry to firestorms of criticism and the threat of legal action. Google avers that the new policy was created for the purpose of simplicity. Google offers more than 60 online services, and each carried its own separate privacy policy until the issuance of the current policy. According to Google's FAQ, the new policy and terms of service ". . .cover multiple products and features, reflecting our desire to create one beautifully simple and intuitive experience across Google."

The 'beautifully simple and intuitive' experience for users raises questions about Google's information sharing practices. Some observers have noted that Google has gleaned data from account holders across the entire range of its services and shared it with third parties for some time. From this point of view, Google is simply making its information sharing practices more explicit. Less sanguine commentators such as John Simpson of Consumer Watchdog argue that Google is combining the data in new ways to assemble large digital dossiers to sell more advertising ("Google Rolls Out New Privacy Policy Amid Howls," Agence France Presse, 1 March 2012).

The greater controversy involves the choices which Google account holders have for controlling their data. With the exception of Google's Chrome browser and a few other services, the policy does not allow users to select which data they wish to allow Google to share and which data they wish to keep private. Instead, Google offers a "data liberation" service for users to migrate all their data elsewhere. The problem lies in the sheer amount of data that millions of users have amassed across a wide array of Google products and services. A February 22nd letter from the National Association of Attorneys General points out that companies which opt to keep their data private might need to move their entire business over to different platforms and re-train employees on web-based sharing, calendar services, and more.

Another option is for users to avoid logging into Google accounts as they use Google services. Mobile phone customers with phones on Google's Android operating system would find this option largely unworkable, however. Without logging into their accounts, Android users would not be able to download new applications and update those already installed. Among the commentators who weighed in on the relative lack of choices for users was FTC Chairman Jon Leibowitz, who commented, "It's a fairly binary and somewhat brutal choice that they are giving consumers" (C-Span "Newsmakers" program, 1 March 2012).

Beyond any dispute over its specific terms, however, the controversy over Google's privacy policy reveals a crisis of image and expectation for Google. The ideal of a free, open Internet which has the potential to usher in revolutionary social change remains a powerful one in American society, and Google cast itself in that image when it coined the motto "Don't Be Evil" to accompany its initial public offering in 2004. The image associated with the brand is now becoming a difficult one for the company to manage.

On February 22nd, the Center for Digital Democracy filed a complaint with the FTC for Google's failure to ". . . accurately and honestly inform users of the *real reasons* for changing its policy" [emphasis added] ("CDD to FTC: Google Violated Buzz Consent Decree," www.democraticmedia.org, "The Latest in Digital Democracy," accessed 15 March 2012). In fact, the new policy makes it clear that Google will share user information with ". . .our partners—like publishers, advertisers and connected sites." (Heading, "Information we share"). Essentially, the staff at CDD believed that Google was using the pro-social and consumer-friendly brand image expressed through the new privacy policy to dupe consumers into accepting the commercial use of their data.

From a media literacy standpoint, media consumers should not content themselves with the text of any policy statement but should acquire the skills needed to analyze its purposes. Frank discussion of the commercial motivations of producers is also in order. In the golden age of broadcast television, media literacy advocates coined the phrase, "You were brought to the sponsor by the program." Today, John Simpson comments, "Remember, you're not Google's customer; you're Google's product" ("Google's New 'Privacy' Policy," www.consumerwatchdog.org, 1 March 2012).

By the same token, effective citizenship in a digital age requires engagement with media producers which moves beyond reflexive criticism. A good example can be found in the letter of concern sent to Google by the National Association of Attorneys General: "Your company claims that users. . .will want their personal information shared. . .because doing so will enable your company to provide them with a 'simple product experience that does what you need, when you want it to,' . . .If that were truly the case, consumers would not only decline to opt out of the new privacy policy, but would freely opt *in* if given the opportunity." In other words, media literate citizens encourage, --if not pressure-- producers to offer them meaningful choices. When media audiences have meaningful choices, they have the opportunity to make wise choices as well.

The letter from the National Association of Attorneys General may be accessed at: <http://www.naag.org/assets/files/pdf/signons/20120222.Google%20Privacy%20Policy%20Final.pdf>

The Google Privacy Policy may be accessed at: <http://www.google.com/intl/en/policies/>

MediaLit Moments

Space Alien Lands Audition on American Idol!

It's common to speak of tabloid news writing as a kind of journalism which can be easily separated from any other kind. From this point of view, all other news publications uphold journalistic standards which tabloids do not begin to meet. And there's some basis to the argument. For example, tabloid writers—in flagrant violation of the rules of attribution--fabricate quotes from fictitious “sources” or “insiders” to pique reader interest in their stories. But in one essential respect, tabloid and mainstream news publications are more similar than they appear to be. They share the same set of news values—the criteria by which news organizations select stories to be published (as listed later in the activity). In this MediaLit Moment, we take advantage of that essential similarity: your high school students will not only have fun producing their own tabloid news, they'll learn something about the way in which all news is constructed.

Ask students to write a tabloid news headline and identify the news values they reflect

AHA!: The crazy headline that I wrote follows the rules for writing any good news story!

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

Key Question #2 for Producers: Does my message reflect understanding in format, creativity and technology?

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

Key Question #3 for Producers: Is my message engaging and compelling for my target audience?

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

Grade Level: 10-12

Materials: Sample tabloid newspapers or headlines; paper, pencil, imagination

Activity: Ask students about their knowledge of and experience with tabloid news. Do any of them like reading tabloid newspapers? Why or why not?

Next, tell students that they're going to learn something about tabloid news by writing their own tabloid news headline. Students should write something they find entertaining, but it needs to be something appropriate for the general public to read. Distribute sample stories or headlines if you wish. Once they're finished, have fun sharing headlines in class. You may want to ask a few students about the thinking behind the headlines they wrote.

Next, display or distribute a list of the news values which editors use to select stories which

are likely to appeal to readers. Here's our list:

- Currency – Has the story just happened? Is it of interest right now?
- Relevance – Does it relate to your life, your family or your community?
- Impact – Does the story affect a large number of people? Are the consequences serious?
- Proximity – Did the story take place nearby or does it relate to local concerns?
- Prominence – Does the story deal with well-known or powerful people or countries?
- Clarity – Will most people be able to understand the story?
- Personalization – Is it a human interest story about an individual person (or animal)?
- Conflict/Controversy – Does the story deal with an issue about which people strongly disagree?
- Emotion – Does the story produce strong emotions such as fear or suspense?
- Uniqueness/Unexpectedness – Is the story about something unusual, unsuspected or odd? Is it about something wonderful or awesome?
- Extension – Is there a relationship with other news stories?

Next, ask students which news values their headlines reflect. Many will fall under the heading of “prominence” or “personalization.” Many will fulfill more than one news value. Did any of them think about these values as they came up with their headline, or did they just churn out a headline without having to think much about it? Which headlines do they think a tabloid editor might have found especially appealing?

Extended Activity: The celebrity news in tabloids often “shadows” the coverage found in more reputable weeklies devoted to celebrity news such as *People* and *Us*. Ask students to compare the different treatments of the same story in each kind of publication. How do news values drive the tabloid version of the story?

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, © 2002-2012, Center for Media Literacy, <http://www.medialit.com>