



NEW MEDIA LITERACIES IN THE DIGITAL CULTURE

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Abstract

Literacies are tools for reading the world. The conventional understanding of literacy is reading, writing, and numeracy. New media environments are broadening this definition by including reading, writing, viewing and speaking. Thus, being literate consists being able to combine these skills in complex ways to create meaning in new media practising.

Jenkins (2006) identified twelve "new media literacy skills" (NMLS) that are necessary for a cultural participation and active digital citizenship in today's media environment. These are: *Play* (the capacity to experiment with one's surroundings as a form of problem-solving), *Performance* (the ability to adopt alternative identities for the purpose of improvisation and discovery), *Simulation* (the ability to interpret and construct dynamic models of real-world processes), *Appropriation* (the ability to meaningfully sample and remix media content), *Multitasking* (the ability to scan one's environment and shift focus as needed to salient details), *Distributed Cognition* (the ability to interact meaningfully with tools that expand mental capacities), *Collective Intelligence* (the ability to pool knowledge and compare notes with others toward a common goal), *Judgment* (the ability to evaluate the reliability and credibility of different information sources), *Transmedia Navigation* (the ability to follow the flow of stories and information across multiple modalities), *Networking* (the ability to search for, synthesize, and disseminate information), *Negotiation* (the ability to travel across diverse communities, discerning and respecting multiple perspectives, and grasping and following alternative norms), *Visualization* (the ability to create and understand visual representations of information).

New media plays a vital role in creating new culture. The importance of new media literacy should not be limited to its technical characteristics. It should be expanded to include its socio-cultural characteristics. Overall, suggestions for researchers, professionals, educators and parents will be presented.

Keywords: New media literacies (NMLS), Media literacy, Henry Jenkins, Web 2.0

Introduction

We live in digital life 7/24 within new media environments. By definition, new media is participatory. Users are no longer just consumers of media; they are producers as well. Users can create content, and this created content becomes instantly replicable and viewable by vast invisible audiences (Common Sense Media, 2011). People use digital media to socialize, conduct search, read news, express themselves, and connect to the world.

93% of kids 12 to 17 are online (Jones & Fox, 2009), more than 35 hours of videos are uploaded to YouTube every minute (YouTube Blog, 2010) and Facebook has over 845 million monthly active users as of December 31, 2011 (Protalinski, 2012). Approximately 20% to 30% of Facebook users are considered "power users": As a result of these power users, the average Facebook user receives friend requests, receives personal messages, is tagged in photos, and receives feedback in terms of 'likes' at a higher frequency than they contribute (Hampton, Sessions Goulet, Marlow & Rainie, 2012).

New media literacy plays an essential role for any citizen to participate fully in today's contemporary culture. To fulfill the promise of digital citizenship, people must acquire multimedia communication skills that include the ability to compose messages using language, graphic design, images, and sound, and know how to use these skills to engage in the civic life of their communities. These competencies must be developed in formal educational settings, especially in K-12 and higher education, as well as informal settings (Hobbs, 2010).

The Council of the European Union Report (2007) also argued that it is crucial to build up better knowledge and understanding of how the media work in the digital world, who the new players in the media economy are and which new possibilities, and challenges, digital media consumption may present. Hence, the purpose of this study is to elaborate new media literacy focusing on its technical and socio-cultural dimensions.

Digital literacy helps people for living, learning and working in a digital society. Hobbs (2010) suggested for all aspects of daily life, people today need a constellation of well-developed communication and problem-solving skills that include these competencies:

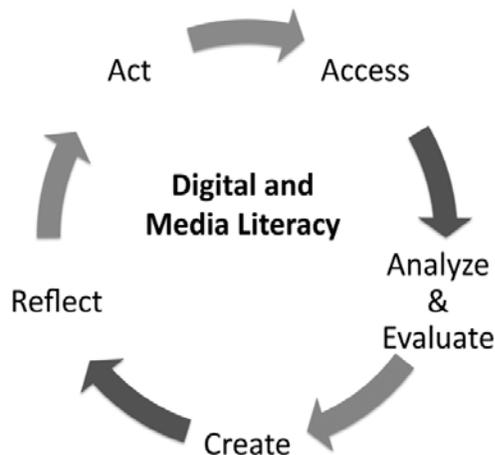


Figure 1: Essential competencies of digital and media literacy (Hobbs, 2010).

Access: Finding and using media and technology tools skillfully and sharing appropriate and relevant information with others.



Analyze & Evaluate: Comprehending messages and using critical thinking to analyze message quality, veracity, credibility, and point of view, while considering potential effects or consequences of messages.

Create: Composing or generating content using creativity and confidence in self-expression, with awareness of purpose, audience, and composition techniques.

Reflect: Applying social responsibility and ethical principles to one's own identity and lived experience, communication behaviour and conduct.

Act: Working individually and collaboratively to share knowledge and solve problems in the family, the workplace and the community, and participating as a member of a community at local, regional, national and international levels.

These five competencies work together in a spiral of empowerment, supporting people's active participation in lifelong learning through the processes of both consuming and creating messages.

In *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century*, Jenkins et al. (2006) describe this new environment as a *participatory culture*. According to this report, a participatory culture has the following characteristics: low barriers for artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing, informal mentorship whereby experienced users pass their knowledge on to novices, an atmosphere that encourages a sense that contributions matter, and an opportunity for social connection.

Jenkins et al. (2006) argue that the concept of media literacy becomes an increasingly vital for media consumption and media production for full participation in today's digital environment. They make a critical theoretical contribution by identifying twelve "new media literacies" (NMLs) that are necessary for a full participation in today's media environment. These skills are: Play, performance, simulation, appropriation, multitasking, distributed cognition, collective intelligence, judgment, transmedia navigation, networking, negotiation, and visualization (Jenkins et al., 2006). The NML framework differs from previous media literacy models. People are active participants in the new digital environment. Jenkins also claims that the focus of literacy has shifted from individual expression to community involvement. Working together with others has become much more important. Jenkins' 12 new media literacy skills are below:

Play: The capacity to experiment with one's surroundings as a form of problem-solving.

Performance: The ability to adopt alternative identities for the purpose of improvisation and discovery.

Simulation: The ability to interpret and construct dynamic models of real-world processes.

Appropriation: The ability to meaningfully sample and remix media content.

Multitasking: The ability to scan one's environment and shift focus as needed to salient details.

Distributed cognition: The ability to interact meaningfully with tools that expand mental capacities.

Collective intelligence: The ability to pool knowledge and compare notes with others toward a common goal.

Judgment: The ability to evaluate the reliability and credibility of different information sources.

Transmedia navigation: The ability to follow the flow of stories and information across multiple modalities.

Networking: The ability to search for, synthesize, and disseminate information.

Negotiation: The ability to travel across diverse communities, discerning and respecting multiple perspectives, and grasping and following alternative norms.

Visualization: The ability to interpret and create data representations for the purposes of expressing ideas, finding patterns, and identifying trends.

Each of these skills represents a principle or approach to learning. NML plans to highlight these emerging skills and practices.

Affiliations (memberships, formal and informal, in online communities such as Facebook); **expressions** (producing new creative forms, such as digital sampling, fan videomaking, fan fiction writing, zines, mash-ups); **collaborative problem-solving** (working together in teams, formal and informal, to complete tasks and develop new knowledge such as Wikipedia); **circulations** (shaping the flow of media such as podcasting, blogging) are forms of participatory culture (Jenkins et al., 2006).

Each of these activities contains opportunities for learning, creative expression, civic engagement, political empowerment, and economic advancement. Some people learn some of these skills through their participation in the informal online learning communities, some people learn in formal education environments. Some countries change their media literacy education programs in the curriculum according to new media literacy requirements.

New media literacy is one of the parts of digital citizenship. As new technologies emerge, people need to learn how to use that technology quickly and appropriately. Digital citizenship involves educating people in a new framework. Most of these people need a high degree of new media literacy skills for become safe, responsible, and respectful digital citizens.

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