



# Media literacy: Ambitions, policies and measures

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# ABOUT

**COST Action ‘Transforming Audiences, Transforming Societies’** (IS0906) brings together researchers from across Europe to coordinate research efforts into the key transformations of European audiences within a changing media and communication environment, identifying their complex interrelationships with the social, cultural and political areas of European societies. See [http://www.cost.esf.org/domains\\_actions/isch/Actions/IS0906-Transforming-Audiences-Transforming-Societies-End-date-February-2014](http://www.cost.esf.org/domains_actions/isch/Actions/IS0906-Transforming-Audiences-Transforming-Societies-End-date-February-2014)

## **COST action Working Group 1, Task Force 4**

The COST Action’s research is divided into four closely related areas of research, each of which is explored by a Working Group. This report was produced by one of the task forces in Working Group 1, which works under the heading “New media genres, media literacy, and trust in the media”. The group’s members examine the ways in which people relate to the overall media landscape of old and new media, and the various sense-making strategies they bring to bear on the media ensemble, as well as on the individual media and their content.

One salient concern within this remit, and the focal research area of Task Force 4, is to what extent audiences can be seen to be media-savvy, i.e. whether they possess the critical abilities necessary to function as enlightened citizens and consumers in the mediatized society: are they audio-visually and digitally literate so as to be able to handle sensibly whatever the media expose them to? In order to answer this question Task Force 4, under the leadership of Sonia Livingstone, has been keen to put dialogues between academic, policy and industry stakeholders on its agenda, and this report testifies to the Task Force’s success in this effort.

The conference, *Transforming Audiences*, was held in Zagreb, 7-9 April 2011. The day before the conference was devoted to Stakeholder Roundtables, the first of which addressed the potential for cooperation between academic and non-academic approaches to media literacy. The Media Literacy Round Table, together with a Media Literacy Conference Panel presented at the conference itself, draw on and develop the work of COST action Working Group 1, Task Force 4.

## **Round Table 1: Media literacy: ambitions, policies and measures**

Participants:

- Sonia Livingstone, Professor, LSE - Chair
- Paolo Celot, Secretary General, EAVI – European Association For Viewers’ Interests
- Susanne Ding, European Commission, Directorate General "Education and Culture"
- Jane Rumble, Media Literacy Group, Ofcom
- Kirsten Drotner, Professor, University of Southern Denmark and DREAM (Respondent)

## **Conference Panel: Media literacy: ambitions, policies and measures**

Participants:

- Sonia Livingstone, Professor, LSE - Chair and paper presenter
- Ben Bachmair, Professor, University of Kassel, and Institute of Education, University of London
- Conceição Costa, Assistant Professor and researcher at CICANT-Lusófona University, Lisbon
- Tao Papaioannou, Assistant Professor, University of Nicosia, Cyprus
- Kirsten Drotner, Professor, University of Southern Denmark and DREAM (Respondent)

# INTRODUCTION

**Sonia Livingstone**, London School of Economics

Theoretical and pedagogic ambitions for media literacy among audiences are often huge, with the promotion of media literacy heralding the promise of empowerment, critical literacy, democratic engagement and participatory culture in a thoroughly mediated world. But historically, these ambitions for media literacy have often foundered in the face of insufficient resources, policy commitment and problems of measurement. The measurement problems are attracting renewed interest now that Europe's Digital Agenda demands a digitally literate citizenry, and now that the Audiovisual Media Services Directive demands three-yearly reporting on improvements in media literacy by all member states.

The Round Table asked how the ambitions held for media literacy can be, and are being, operationalised into practical measures. Will the use of such measures reveal genuine improvements over time in the audience's media literacy? How best can we promote dialogue across academic, policy and industry stakeholders? It brought three kinds of expertise. At the level of European policy, Susanne Ding presented the ambitions, analysis and policies of the European Commission as regards media literacy. Paolo Celot represented the audience's own perspective, presenting a unified approach to research on media literacy. Jane Rumble, from the UK communications regulator, presented empirical findings on recent trends in media literacy.

The Conference Panel comprised five papers. The first and last frame the issue of media literacy as it faces audience researchers, considering the framing and interpretation of the research and policy agenda (Sonia Livingstone) and then questions of politics and implementation as academic research interfaces with the policy world (Kirsten Drotner). In between, we present three empirically-focused papers that tackle key issues of media literacy, both in relation to children. Ben Bachmair related media literacy research to the emerging literature on social networking sites, considering youthful digital literacy in a web 2.0 world while Conceição Costa considered issues of commercialisation of childhood (and media literacy as a possible defence). Tao Papaioannou critically examines the pedagogic contribution of semi-formal settings to digital literacy learning, offering future directions for work in this complex domain.

Kirsten Drotner acted as respondent to both the Round Table and the Conference Panel, and the paper that follows draws together her responses to both events.

# THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S APPROACH TO MEDIA LITERACY

Susanne Ding, European Commission, DG Education and Culture

## Background

The following definition of media literacy has been agreed between the European Commission media literacy experts and was approved by the Council. It is the basis for all further actions and initiatives on EU level including the assessment of media literacy levels<sup>1</sup>.

Media literacy is the ability to access the media, to understand and to critically evaluate different aspects of the media and media contents and to create communications in a variety of contexts. It includes all media. The aim of media literacy is to increase people's awareness of the many forms of media messages encountered in their everyday lives. Media messages are the programmes, films, images, texts, sounds and websites that are carried by different forms of communication. Media literacy is a matter of inclusion and citizenship in today's information society. It is a fundamental skill not only for young people but also for adults and elderly people, parents, teachers and media professionals. Media literacy is today regarded as one of the key pre-requisites for an active and full citizenship in order to prevent and diminish risks of exclusion from community life.

Since 2006, in response to calls from the European Parliament, the media and ICT industries and building on the results of media literacy projects supported through the eLearning Initiative, the Commission started a reflection on media literacy within the frameworks of European Audiovisual policy and the Lisbon strategy. At the end of 2007, the Commission adopted a Communication on media literacy adding a further building block to European audiovisual policy and linking to the provisions of the Audiovisual Media Services directive (AVMS)<sup>2</sup> - Article 26 introduced a reporting obligation for the Commission on levels of media literacy in all Member States - and the MEDIA 2007 programme. In 2009, the Commission came forward with a Recommendation<sup>3</sup> on media literacy stressing the important role of Member States (in cooperation with the authorities in charge of audiovisual and electronic communication regulation) and the Media industry in improving the level of media literacy in society.

In addition, within the global political context of the EUROPE 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and of the European Digital Agenda<sup>4</sup>, the Commission stressed that the digital era should be about empowerment and emancipation of citizens. Lack of background knowledge, literacy or skills should not be a barrier to accessing the new opportunities offered by the media and the information society.

From its beginning, EU media literacy policy has been followed by an expert group which advised the Commission to engage in research on assessment criteria for media literacy levels. The expert group was an important interface with the academics active in the field of media literacy and other stakeholders like broadcasters or national film funds. At the time relevant data on media literacy was scarcely available. In particular, a European overview based on a common understanding of the concept of media literacy did not and still does not exist. However, such a data base would be indispensable for the creation of a coherent European policy framework on media literacy. This opinion was shared by both the European Parliament and the Council which initiated the reporting obligation in the AVMS directive. Therefore, the Commission decided to launch several studies on media literacy policy in Member States and on assessment criteria on media literacy levels<sup>5</sup>. The latest ongoing study which will be finalized this year is testing the assessment criteria developed in a previous study in different clusters of Member States and age groups. This study will be the basis for the Commission report on media literacy levels referred to in Article 26 of the AVMSD.

The notion of "measurement" has been deliberately avoided in this context. In scientific terminology measurement is commonly perceived as the process of obtaining the magnitude of a quantity, such as length or mass, relative to a unit of measurement. As regards media literacy measurement can be

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<sup>1</sup> Communication: A European approach to media literacy in the digital environment COM (2007) 833final, Council Conclusions on media literacy in the digital environment of 27. November 2009

<sup>2</sup> Directive 2007/65/EC

<sup>3</sup> Recommendation on media literacy in the digital environment for a more competitive audiovisual and content industry and an inclusive knowledge society, C(2009) 6464 final

<sup>4</sup> Communication: A Digital Agenda for Europe, COM(2010) 245 final

<sup>5</sup> See full list of studies: [http://ec.europa.eu/culture/media/literacy/studies/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/culture/media/literacy/studies/index_en.htm)

perceived in terms of access to media. However, critical understanding of media, which is the core element of media literacy, is difficult to define in specific quantities. Critical understanding can better be approached and assessed by indicators or assessment criteria addressing the components that build media literacy.

### **A concept for the assessment of media literacy levels in Europe**

The 2009 study was carried out by a consortium of European media literacy expert organizations.<sup>6</sup> The main objectives of the study were to provide the Commission with a set of assessment criteria, to apply these criteria to a number of Member States, to evaluate different media literacy policies and to derive recommendations for policy measures on a European level.

The study identified two criteria levels within media literacy, one individual level and one referring to environmental factors that influence media literacy<sup>7</sup>:

#### Individual Competences

(defined as individual capacity to exercise certain skills):

- social competences: Communicative abilities
- personal competences: Critical understanding (knowledge of media and media regulation, understanding media content and use of media (including digital skills))

#### Environmental Factors

- (defined as a set of contextual factors that impact media literacy)
- media availability, access
- wider media literacy context (media education, media literacy policy, activity of civil society regarding media literacy)

These indicators have been translated into questionnaires and will be tested on a selection of Member States in the follow up study.

### **Practical measures deriving from the assessment of media literacy levels**

- The Commission is aiming to establish a comprehensive overview on the levels of media literacy in Europe. Taking the Article 26 report of the AVMSD as a starting point, a complementary consultation of Member States about their media literacy policy is currently being discussed. The basis of this consultation would be the set of criteria developed and tested in the above described studies. This process could eventually lead to an ongoing monitoring of media literacy in Europe. Such a constantly up-dated scientific fundament is needed in order to learn more about the impact of media literacy initiatives, to identify the most effective ones and to promote them on a European level. Media literacy is an evolving concept. It changes regularly as does the media itself, the technology and also user behaviour. Media literacy policy must itself constantly adapt to these changes. A constant monitoring would help to keep pace with the fast developing media industry.
- Media literacy research clearly shows that there is a broad correlation between the individual level of media literacy and environmental factors such as the existence of a structured media literacy policy. The European Commission rather than supporting single projects with limited leverage effect sees its main role in helping Member States to benefit from each others achievements in media literacy policy. A European platform could foster such exchange and transfer of knowledge. European coordination would further facilitate the cooperation between policy makers and with Europe wide operating media companies.
- The European Commission has provided such a platform through the media literacy expert group. This group will be restructured later this year with the aim of integrating experts from the field of education in schools and educational policy makers. In its 2009 Recommendation the Commission asked that *"the Member States, [...] open a debate in conferences and other public events on the inclusion of media literacy in the compulsory education curriculum, and as part of*

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<sup>6</sup> EAVI Consortium (European Association for Viewers' Interests (EAVI), CLEMI, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Université Catholique de Louvain and the University of Tampere): Study on Assessment Criteria for Media Literacy Levels - A comprehensive view of the concept of media literacy and an understanding of how media literacy level in Europe should be assessed (2009)

<sup>7</sup> For more details on the determined criteria see study (FN6) Annex L

*the provision of key competences for lifelong learning, set out in the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning".*

- Also the 2009 study recommended integrating media education both as specific goals and cross curricular objectives. Special attention should be given to teacher training.
- In the new expert group the Commission would like to discuss and analyse different models of media education in schools. In addition, a study will be prepared on "The place of film literacy in European school education. Analysis of current status, trends, opportunities and impact". The work of the expert group accompanied by the study may feed into a Communication on digital and media literacy in education and contribute to the preparation of a new generation of European support programmes that will start in 2014.
- Although certain regulatory measures like the development of new school curricula is key to an increase in the level of media literacy in Europe, civil society initiatives are also an essential component of media literacy. The Commission aims at strengthening these activities by integrating media literacy as a cross cutting objective in audiovisual and also educational support programmes.
- For the audiovisual sector an important element will be the new MEDIA programme which is currently been developed aiming at the delivery of a draft proposal before the end of 2011. At a recent European Parliament public hearing, the German film director Wim Wenders stated: *"A key challenge for this future Programme will be to address the needs of the film and audiovisual industry, so that it responds to current European and global developments, and to find new ways of creating value and of driving revenues. Film literacy must be an explicit part of the forthcoming MEDIA Programme. It needs to be strengthened, for the sake of Europe's self-images well as for its economic future."*
- The Commission decided to set up a focus group that discussed if and how support for media and film related educational activities could be integrated into the future MEDIA Programme. The overall objective is to shift from an offer driven programme scheme to a focus on the demand for European audiovisual works which is essential for the future of European cinema from an industry and from a cultural point of view.

Media literacy is part of many EU policies from audiovisual policy, the MEDIA and the Safer Internet Programme to educational policy including the Life Long learning initiative. It is an element of several flagship initiatives of the EU 2020 strategy such as the Digital Agenda or New skills for new jobs. The EU Commission considers media literacy an essential factor active citizenship, democratic participation and social cohesion.

The main task for the future will be to further strengthen the role of media literacy in these policy field, streamline the understanding of media literacy and the requirements for media literacy education, encourage stakeholders in the public and private sector to increase their initiatives while constantly adapting to new results in media literacy research or the development of new technologies.

# MEDIA LITERACY, EVERYBODY'S DARLING – ITS STRATEGIC FUNCTIONS AND RELEVANT ITEMS FOR A FRAMEWORK?

**Ben Bachmair**, Em. Professor University of Kassel, Visiting Professor, Institute of Education, University of London

My polemic headline is linked to the panels frame by the question: “How are the ambitions held for media literacy framed?”. In respect to the ambitions for media literacy I am suspecting that *media literacy* has a strategic function, which is not targeting to the children's relation to media. Primarily media literacy is a business of media education with its more or less specific practices and its research. Further more and in a societal perspective media literacy seems to be harnessed by the new content providers within media convergence for reducing their responsibility for the young generation. It is rather simple and cheap to pass the societal responsibility as backpack of media literacy on the shoulders of parents and teachers.

## 1. Media literacy, its strategic functions

For the moment I see two strategic functions for media literacy. One contains campaigns in the institutional field of media education. Its pursuit is to stabilise the professional field. The second one legitimises a range of institutions in the wider field of media and education by a *media literacy projects*, which lead and leads to a flood of rather arbitrary offerings.

Since a couple of years media literacy functions as a kind of marketing tool for media education and delivers a target for campaigns. I am providing some examples for this development. I was involved in one of the examples, the *European Charter for Media Literacy*, <http://www.euromedialiteracy.eu/charterall.php>. In 2004 and 2005 after conferences on European media education in Belfast (May 2004) and Karlstad (Sweden September 2004) there was the endeavour to reach a common definition of media literacy and, secondly, to get away from short time EU funding for projects and conferences. Sustainability for media education and its practices stood in the foreground. A Charter project was founded to set up a stable and identifiable group of individual and institutional supporters for media literacy by the mean of a website. An European steering group developed a Charter text of seven key competences for media literacy (Bachmair, Bazalgette 2007), e.g. “Gain access to, and make informed choices about a wide range of media forms and content from different cultural and institutional sources” (p. 84).

One of the strategic aims was to “build links with other signatories and contribute to the growth of a European network for media literacy” (p. 85). It is not simple to assess the contribution of such a project to the sustainability of media education. But the Declaration de Bruxelles, <http://www.declarationdebruxelles.be> or the German campaign “Keine Bildung ohne Medien“ (no education and learning without media), <http://keine-bildung-ohne-medien.mixxt.de> are indicators that the sustainability of media education was not reached. On the contrary the power to set the media educational agenda is shifting to others groups and institutions outside the professional field of media education. It is probably not by coincidence that the German Federal Parliament, *Bundestag*, established an *Enquete-Kommission* to discuss and evaluate the “Internet and the Digital Society” (“Internet und digitale Gesellschaft”, <http://www.bundestag.de/internetenquete>). This institutional contexts frames media literacy (Medienkompetenz) with “neutrality of the Internet”, copyright, online-participation, data protection and protection of children and young people from harmful content. There is now no conflict on the relevance of media literacy for protecting the children and young people from harmful content. In former media educational times, especially in Germany, child protection was blamed as an old fashioned and restrictive pedagogy.

Now, a conflict line runs between neo-liberal supporters of an no regulated Internet and institutions of child protection. The no-regulation supporters appreciate media literacy as the leading tool for child protection (see Livingstone's hints on the “deregulatory agenda”, Livingstone 2011, pp. 36 ff.). Child protection shifts from the content provider to media literacy as the task of the public, e.g. school, and families. In the context of this debate another shift is interesting. It is the amalgamation of media enhanced learning especially by smart phones with media literacy. In this discussion the barrier between media education and media enhanced learning is on the way to become obsolete. This



combination challenges an media educational framework, for which I am proposing to use the concept of “cultural resources” as a trigger for the debate.

In contrast to the uprising media education of the 1970s and 1980s nowadays there is flood of practical offering for media literacy. Further, it seems not to be coincidental, that new player plough in the field of media education under the flag of media literacy. Just one German example of such new players, the German regulation boards for broadcasting and Internet (Landesmedienanstalten) Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Landesmedienanstalten 2011, pp. 300 ff.). These boards offer a wide range of material and platforms for all possible target groups, e.g. media guiding licences, scouts, talk shows, workshops for film production or computer games, behavioural codes for the internet, ‘sound clubs’, a web 2.0 platform for young people on media, training for nurses, competitions and awards, programmes for migrants or seniors etc. (Also well informed educationalist have to surrender facing this flood; one can’t get an informed overview of the existing projects. Not to mention that there is no kind of a common framework, which give the offering a coherence.

Considering media educational campaigns and the flood of practical projects and offering one may ask questions. Before raising question one footnote is not unimportant. These campaigns and offerings are usually socially and educationally intelligent. But the first question gives a new drive to media education: Who are the winners? Media users / citizens / media and programme provider / political parties/ media educational institutions / research/ young job seeking educationalist / families / teachers? The second question is on the reached achievement of the campaigns and offering. Is the achievement a new project / a big budget / jobs / reputation / literacy? The third questions considers sustainability; sustainability with short time project or with proper institutions?

## 2. Relevant brick stones for a media literacy framework?

Sustainability is a typical economic issues. Among other fields sustainability is a key for an approach to ecology. In our media educational context sustainability and ecology need a re-interpretation beyond the questions of exploiting nature or producing organic food. In an ecological framework for media education the focus should be on child development under the conditions of moulding media in economy, in everyday life, for learning etc.. With such a re-interpretation of the concept of ecology in the sense of a *cultural ecology* (see Pachler et al., pp. 155 ff.) I am proposing to avoid *media literacy* or *citizenship* as starting point for a media literacy framework. Perhaps this proposal sounds clumsy. But *media literacy* or *citizenship* are well-worn and hackneyed argumentative coins from former media educational times. *Former* means, that we need argumentative patterns which respond e.g. to the dramatic changing of the mass communication to an active and convergent system of user generated contexts and contents. Headlines like the following one are challenging a response to the society’s transformation with and by individualization, mobility and media convergence: “education in the creative economy” (Araya, Peters 2010). In this perspective media and user generated contexts and user generated content are cultural resources. The issue of resources has now to be considered *educationally* in the line of the critical discourse on energy and nature not at all as just exploitable. Old media as well as new user generated contexts and content are cultural resources, to which education has the obligation to define its version of a *cultural ecology*. Not following consequently my polemic above on hackneyed concepts also critical media literacy and citizenship are valuable and can be helpful to prolong the media educational tradition and experiences into the *global knowledge society*. But for leaving behind just mantras of the public debate like the *global knowledge society*, we, that means media education, should enrich our framework with new ideas like the following ones:

- The interrelation of socio-cultural structures, personal agency and cultural practices to and with media are in a enormous transformation. The traditional active-passive scheme for mass communication looses its dominance and will be complemented or replaced by user generated contexts and content. In this developmental line the social responsibility is transgressing from the media provider to everybody, who are not longer just media user or an audience. The structures and the practices of the public has already changed. The individualization of the societal risk has captured media use and also learning. We are facing at-risk learners with specific patterns of media use in their socio-cultural milieu environment.
- Who are the winners and losers in this transformation, e.g. the parents who are becoming fully responsible for the media competence of their children? A new kind of cultural poverty is emerging. Just one structural feature of a cultural poverty is in the debate, the digital divide, the exclusion by a missing access to internet. But meanwhile all kids world wide do have a mobile phone or a smart phone. Therefore a mobile device is not really relevant for new forms of poverty in the sense of not having one. But perhaps the old literacy of reading of writing helps to avoid a cultural and social deteriorating and works as door opener to professional success?

- What kind of educational model is now adequate? I am promoting a combination of an semiotic approach to learning and acting as meaning making with an approach to learning and development by the appropriation of cultural products. Learning as meaning making is becoming concrete among others within the model of the situated learning (Lave, Wenger 1991). The appropriation model is a basic in the educational version of Vygotsky's interrelation of learning and development (1930 / 1978, 79 ff.).

Usually but not really well considered is the appropriation model as an integrated part of media education and its definitions of media literacy. But in an ecological approach and framework the appropriation of cultural resources and its input for child development has to be considered within a triangulation of new socio-cultural structures, modes of agency and the cultural practices. On the basis of such an analytical work we can ask for the educational support for meaning making, appropriation and human development, which should provide by media education.

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# OFCOM'S MEDIA LITERACY WORK

Jane Rumble, Media literacy group, Ofcom

The presentation covered 4 areas: Ofcom's role in relation to media literacy; Ofcom's approach to date; recent developments; and a brief overview of Ofcom's media literacy research including some key trends in UK children's levels of media literacy levels.

## Section 1: Ofcom's role in relation to media literacy

The Office of Communications (Ofcom) is the UK's independent communications regulator. The promotion of media literacy is a responsibility placed on Ofcom by the Section 11 Duty to promote media literacy in the 2003 Communications Act.

Section 11 (1) states that 'It shall be the duty of OFCOM to take such steps, and to enter into such arrangements, as appear to them calculated:

- (a) to bring about, or to encourage others to bring about, a better public understanding of the nature and characteristics of material published by means of the electronic media;
- (b) to bring about, or to encourage others to bring about, a better public awareness and understanding of the processes by which such material is selected, or made available, for publication by such means;
- (c) to bring about, or to encourage others to bring about, the development of a better public awareness of the available systems by which access to material published by means of the electronic media is or can be regulated;
- (d) to bring about, or to encourage others to bring about, the development of a better public awareness of the available systems by which persons to whom such material is made available may control what is received and of the uses to which such systems may be put; and
- (e) to encourage the development and use of technologies and systems for regulating access to such material, and for facilitating control over what material is received, that are both effective and easy to use.'

Under Section 14 (6a) of the 2003 Communications Act, Ofcom also has a duty to make arrangements for the carrying out of research, including into the matters mentioned in Section 11.

There is no single, agreed definition of media literacy. Media literacy can be seen as an umbrella term that covers a set of skills, knowledge, and understanding of the media and communications technology. Ofcom uses the following definition "*Media literacy is the ability to use, understand, and create media and communications.*"

Ofcom describes media literacy as the ability to:

- use the technology, search and navigate to find what you are looking for;
- understand that material, and to have an opinion about it;
- where necessary, to create a response to it and interact with other users.

## Section 2: Ofcom's approach to the promotion of media literacy in the UK

Ofcom's work in the promotion of media literacy in the UK has been related to 4 specific areas of activity: (1) providing and communicating an evidence base that measures media literacy levels in the UK among children and adults; (2) working with different organisations across a broad range of media literacy issues; (3) developing media literacy initiatives; and (4) funding media literacy initiatives. This section outlines some of Ofcom's work in relation to points 2-4 above, whereas more details on our research can be found in section 4.

### *Working with organisations and sharing information*

Ofcom has worked with a wide range of organisations to promote media literacy. These include the UK Council for Child Internet Safety, the BBC, National Institute for Adult Continuing Education, Get Safe Online, The Media Education Association, Race Online, and Nations networks set up in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

We have organised events at Ofcom to discuss media literacy research and findings with industry, academics and other organisations. Academics and industry are also invited to present their own work in this area. The events aim to help promote a dialogue across different groups about the levels of media literacy across the UK and different approaches to undertaking research in this area.

Ofcom helped to found the International Media Literacy Research Forum (IMLRF) which provides an opportunity to understand and share learning about emerging media literacy issues at a global level. It is a hub for policymakers, practitioners, regulators and researchers worldwide to communicate, share ideas and promote their media literacy work ([www.imlrf.org](http://www.imlrf.org)). Ofcom has produced a monthly e-bulletin to inform over 1800 people and organisations about developments in this area.

We support UK audiences by providing practical resources for parents and carers, as well as educators which we publish on our website. Our guides include protecting children in a digital world, how to use parental controls on mobile phones, games consoles and portable media players; and how to help keep children safe when using location based services.

#### *Initiatives*

Specific initiatives undertaken by Ofcom to promote media literacy include helping to develop the UK's first media literacy qualification and associated learning resource (Switch On!) for practitioners working with people with learning difficulties and disabilities.

### **Section 3: Recent developments**

#### *Wider context*

Ofcom undertakes its media literacy work within the context of UK and international social, technological, political and economic developments, some of which are outlined below.

Since 2007 a range of reports have been commissioned that are relevant to media literacy in the UK. The Labour government commissioned the Byron Review, undertaken by Professor Tanya Byron that examined children's online safety in 2008. This led to the establishment of the UK Council for Child Internet safety (UKCCIS); a coalition of organisations, including industry, that work together to improve children's safety online. In 2009 the Buckingham Review, led by Professor David Buckingham, considered the impact of the commercial world on children's wellbeing. Whereas the Papadopoulos review of the sexualisation of young people considered that children are far more exposed to sexual imagery now than ever before, and that parents have limited opportunities to stop it.

In 2010 under the new Coalition government, a Childhood and Families Task Force was established, chaired by the Prime Minister. The role of this group is to identify a small number of specific policy proposals that will make the biggest difference to children and families. The Government asked Reg Bailey, Chief Executive of the Mothers' Union, to undertake an independent review examining the pressures on children to grow up too quickly. The review was published in June 2011.

At a European-wide level, there have been a number of developments. These include the European Communication on media literacy in December 2007. The Audio Visual Media Services Directive was introduced in 2009 and requires that the European Commission report on the levels of Media Literacy in all European Union Member States by December 2011 and every three years thereafter.

#### *Ofcom's media literacy work today*

In an online environment where the possibility or appetite for direct content regulation may diminish, the need for a media literate public increases. In developing Ofcom's digital media policies, we need to understand how changes might affect the public. Consumers and citizens need to understand the trade-offs between risks and opportunities across an array of online and mobile service activities, while Government/policy makers/NGOs and Ofcom need to understand and monitor how much people are aware of changes and developments. Ofcom's research into people's media literacy needs provides organisations with the evidence they need to best target their initiatives.

Our media literacy research informs three of Ofcom's strategic priorities: to provide appropriate assurance to audiences on standards; to help communications markets work for consumers; and to contribute and implement public policy as defined by Parliament.

As a result of the spending review, Ofcom has recently reviewed its media literacy activity. Outlined in its annual plan 2011/12, Ofcom will focus on the provision and dissemination of research to identify media literacy needs and emerging issues in the UK. We will focus on the safe and informed use and understanding of digital content among adults and children, and in particular:

- Critical understanding of digital media (e.g. understanding the provenance of information sources and due trust in content forms)
- Content management (e.g. use of filters, parental controls, content information - especially in relation to privacy and personal data online).

#### **Section 4: Key trends in UK children's media literacy**

Ofcom undertakes a programme of research to understand people's media literacy levels in the UK.

Our main vehicles of media literacy measurement are our quantitative surveys among UK adults aged 16+ and among UK children aged 5 to 15 and their parents. In each case, the surveys use a face-to-face method, with a sample of around 2000 respondents. The results are published in our annual media literacy audit reports<sup>8</sup>.

Our annual research programme includes a study called 'Media Lives', a longitudinal qualitative research project that involves 15 people aged 18 to 73 talking about their media use and attitudes. The research helps us to stay in touch with emerging media literacy needs and brings to life some of our research.

Ofcom's media literacy research has included a number of one-off studies. For example, to help understand processes of critical evaluation of online content, we commissioned an exploratory qualitative study that involved in-depth interviews, discussion groups and eye-tracking<sup>9</sup>. Whereas to understand consumers'/citizens' media use across the day, we used self completion diaries in the digital day work<sup>10</sup>.

Each research study requires us to operationalise the term media literacy. Overall, we aim to cover the areas outlined in Ofcom's definition of media literacy as stated above. For example, the questionnaires cover people's ability to use, understand, and create media and communications.

The key objective of our media literacy audit research is to provide a rich picture of the different elements of media literacy across the platforms of the internet, television, radio, and mobile phones. This is with the intention of identifying emerging issues and skills gaps that can then help to target stakeholders' resources for the promotion of media literacy. Our research therefore aims to cover the breadth and depth of people's media and communications use and understanding across platform.

The following section outlines *some* of the results from our media literacy audit research among UK children and how media use, attitudes, and understanding levels have changed over time. It will focus mainly on results relating to the internet.

##### *Children's media literacy*

Figure 1 shows that TV remains the preferred medium for 5-7s (52%), and 8-11s (45%), although there has been an increase among 8-11s saying they would most-miss the internet (15% in 2010 v. 10% in 2009). Children aged 12-15 are now as likely to miss the internet (24%) and mobiles (26%) as they are to miss TV (24%). The proportion who say TV is their preferred medium has fallen from 32% in 2009.

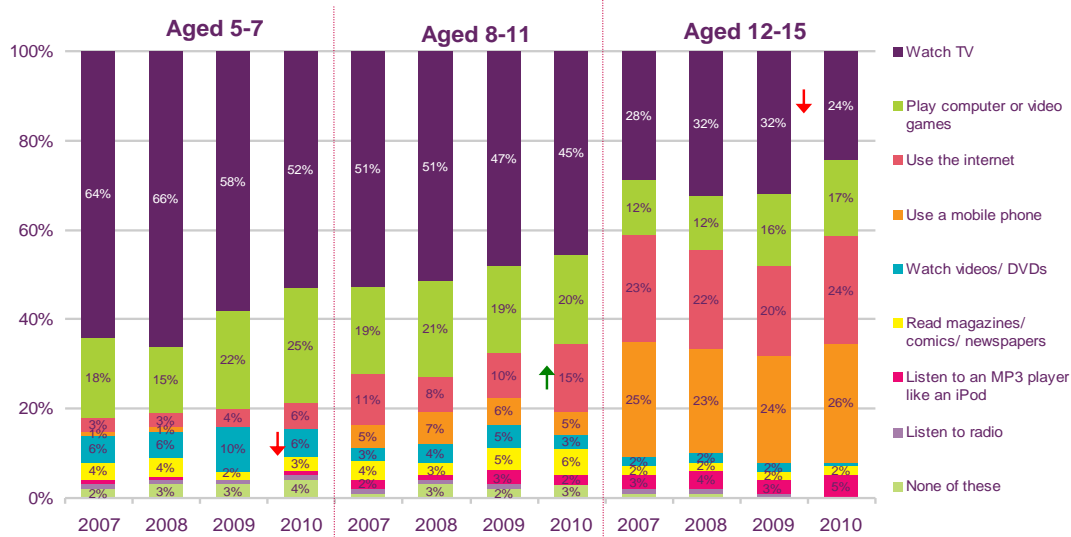
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<sup>8</sup> See <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/market-data-research/media-literacy-pubs/> for full report.

<sup>9</sup> See [http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/market-data-research/media-literacy/medlitpub/medlitpubrss/assess\\_online\\_content/](http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/market-data-research/media-literacy/medlitpub/medlitpubrss/assess_online_content/) for the full report.

<sup>10</sup> See <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/market-data-research/market-data/digital-day/> for full report.

**Figure 1: Medium miss most by age of child, 5-7, 8-11 and 12-15 years**



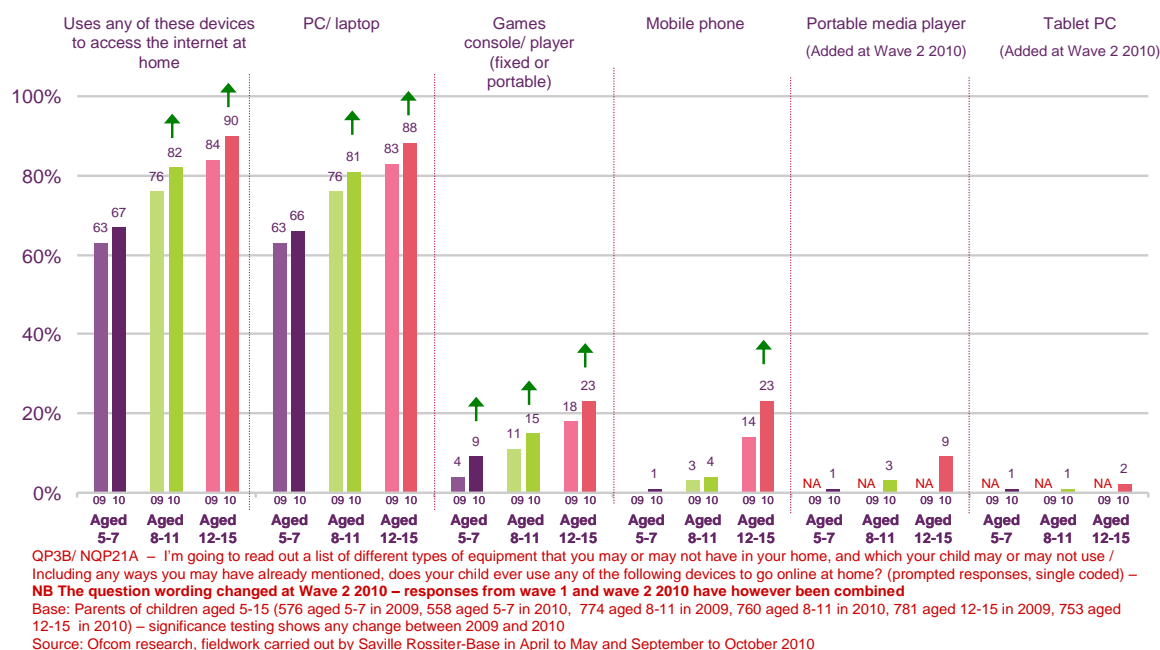
QC39B – Which one of the things you do almost every day, would you miss doing the most if it got taken away?  
 Base: Children aged 5-15 (985 aged 5-7 in 2007, 563 aged 5-7 in 2008, 576 aged 5-7 in 2009, 558 aged 5-7 in 2010, 1354 aged 8-11 in 2007, 748 aged 8-11 in 2008, 774 aged 8-11 in 2009, 760 aged 8-11 in 2010, 1357 aged 12-15 in 2007, 755 aged 12-15 in 2008, 781 aged 12-15 in 2009, 753 aged 12-15 in 2010) – sig testing show any difference between 2009 and 2010  
 Source: Ofcom research, fieldwork carried out by Saville Rossiter-Base in April to May and September to October 2010

Children’s use of the internet at home has increased over time, as has their use of alternative devices to access the internet at home (Figure 2).

While four in five children aged 5-15 (80%) use the internet at home through a PC or laptop, one in six (16%) goes online via a fixed or portable games console/ games player, one in ten (10%) via a mobile phone, one in twenty through a portable media player (5%) and less than one in twenty through a tablet PC (1%).

The likelihood of accessing the internet through any of these devices increases with age. Use of a PC/ laptop to access the internet has increased since 2009 for 12-15s, while using a mobile phone to access the internet has also increased since 2009 (23% vs. 14%). Accessing the internet at home through a fixed or portable games player/ console has also increased since 2009 for each of 5-7s (9% vs. 4%), 8-11s (15% vs. 11%) and 12-15s (23% vs. 18%).

**Figure 2: Devices ever used by children to access the internet at home: 2009 and 2010<sup>11</sup>**



Our research examines the types of activities that children undertake online on a regular basis. Children who use the internet at home were prompted with a range of internet activities and were asked to say which they ever do online, and how often they do them<sup>12</sup>.

These uses have been grouped into eight types in Figure 3 below, in order to assess breadth of use of the internet.

- Schoolwork / homework – relates to finding information online for their studies;
- Communication – relates to uses such as sending or receiving email or using Instant Messaging services;
- Social networking – relates to visiting social networking websites like Facebook or Bebo, or virtual worlds (like Club Penguin or Moshi Monsters);
- Information – relates to general surfing/ browsing/ looking around the internet<sup>13</sup>, or looking at blogs or wikis (only asked of 8-15s);
- Music – relates to downloading or playing music over the internet;
- Games – relates to playing games on websites or online;
- News – relates to visiting news websites (only asked of 8-15s in 2008 and 2009);
- Radio – relates to listening to radio over the internet.

The relative height of the columns in Figure 3 indicates the proportion of children carrying out the activities, and as such represents breadth of use.

Breadth of use has a clear link to the age of the child, with 5-7s continuing to have the narrowest use of the internet and 12-15s the broadest use. Children aged 5-7 mostly use the internet at least

<sup>11</sup> At Wave 2 in 2010, the questions establishing the devices that the child uses to go online at home were amended in order to establish devices 'ever used' and 'mostly used'. It has, however, been possible to combine the responses across the relevant questions at Wave 1 and Wave 2 to get an overall figure for 2010.

<sup>12</sup> These activities in no way represent an exhaustive list of all the potential activities that children can undertake online. In order to draw comparisons over time Figure 25 shows only those activities that children were asked about in a consistent manner between 2007 and 2010 – some activities have therefore been excluded.

<sup>13</sup> In 2009 the wording of this particular question was 'Looking for information on websites about things that interest them'.

weekly for games (39%), schoolwork (31%) for visiting virtual worlds/ social networking websites (23%) or for information (15%)<sup>14</sup>.

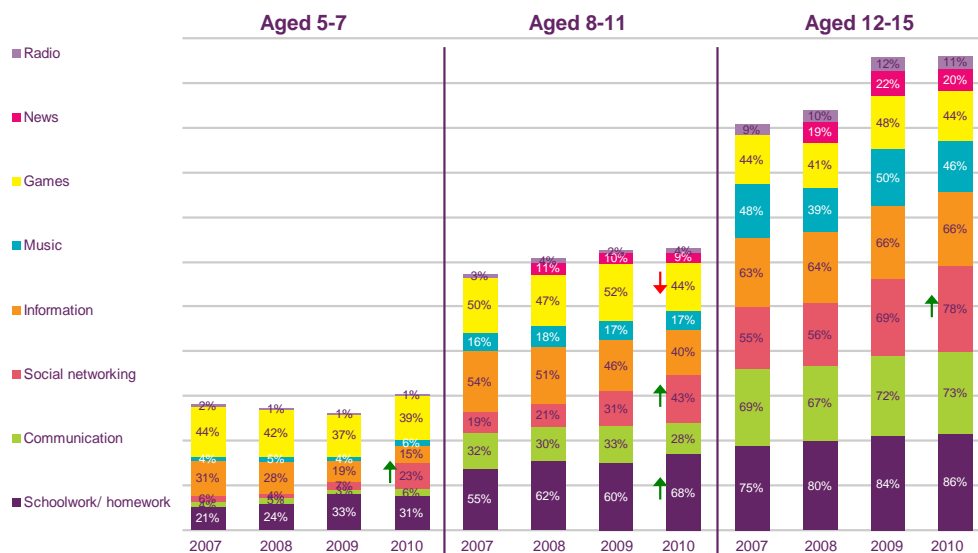
The majority of children aged 8-11 use the internet for schoolwork (68%) and around two in five use it for gaming (44%), social networking (43%) or for information (40%). Communication (28%) and music (17%) are the next most popular categories, with one in ten using the internet weekly or more often for news (9%).

The majority of 12-15s use the internet at least weekly for four of the eight categories: schoolwork (86%), social networking (78%), communication (73%), and information (66%).

Children aged 5-7 who use the internet at home are now more likely than in 2009 to use it at least weekly for social networking purposes (23% vs. 7%). This is not to say that children aged 5-7 are now more likely to visit mainstream social networking sites like Facebook or Bebo; this type of weekly use has remained constant over time (5% in 2010). It is instead driven by an increase in this age group visiting virtual worlds such as Club Penguin or Moshi Monsters (up from 6% in 2009 to 20% in 2010).

Since 2009, children aged 8-11 are also now more likely to visit social networking sites at least weekly (43% vs. 31%) and to use the internet for schoolwork/ homework (68% vs. 60%) and are less likely to use the internet weekly for gaming (44% vs. 52%). As with 5-7s, only one activity is now more likely to be undertaken at least weekly by 12-15s: social networking (78% vs. 69%).

**Figure 3: Internet activities carried out at least once a week by users: 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010**



QC13A-M – Thinking about what you do when you use the internet at home, do you use the internet to do any of these? (prompted responses, multi-coded) – PERCENTAGES SHOWN REFLECT THOSE THAT UNDERTAKE ACTIVITY AT LEAST WEEKLY  
 Base: Children aged 5-15 who use the internet at home (280 aged 5-7 in 2007, 308 aged 5-7 in 2008, 340 aged 5-7 in 2009, 343 aged 5-7 in 2010, 499 aged 8-11 in 2007, 527 aged 8-11 in 2008, 582 aged 8-11 in 2009, 597 aged 8-11 in 2010, 587 aged 12-15 in 2007, 614 aged 12-15 in 2008, 645 aged 12-15 in 2009, 665 aged 12-15 in 2010). Significance testing shows any change between 2009 and 2010  
 Source: Ofcom research, fieldwork carried out by Saville Rossiter-Base in April to May and September to October 2010

Given the popularity of social networking, questions relating specifically to children’s use of social networking sites have been included in Ofcom’s media literacy research since 2007.

Figure 4 shows the proportion of children aged 5-7<sup>15</sup>, 8-11 and 12-15 who currently have an active profile on any social networking websites. One in twenty parents of children aged 5-7 (5%) say their child has a social networking site profile. Slightly more than one in four children aged 8-11 (27%) say they have a profile, as do four in five children aged 12-15 (79%). Both 8-11s and 12-15s are now more likely to have an active social networking site profile than they were in 2009.

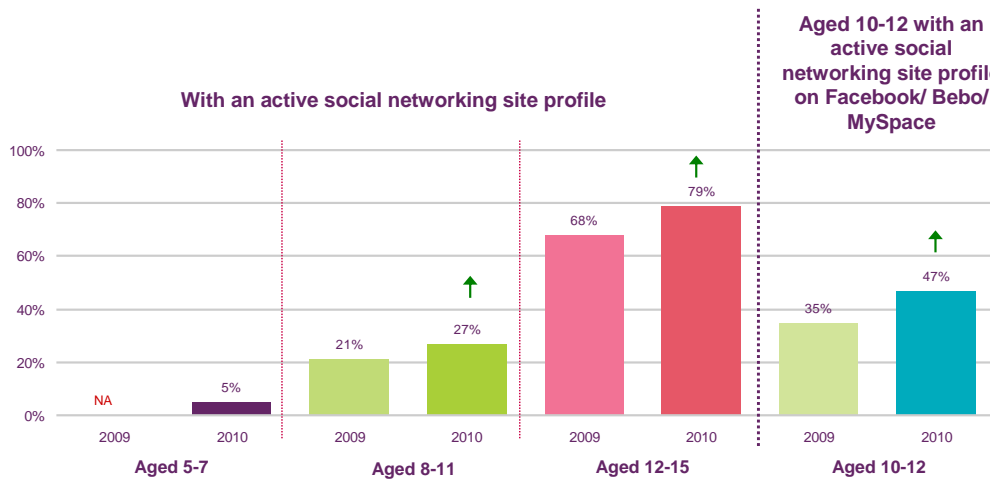
<sup>14</sup> While 5-7s appear to have a narrower use of the internet, these data look at those activities undertaken online at least weekly. 5-7s may use the internet for these purposes but not always on a weekly basis.

<sup>15</sup> In 2010 parents of children aged 5-7 were asked whether their child has a profile on a social networking site, but all subsequent questions about children’s use of social networking sites were only asked of children aged 8-11 or 12-15 or their parents.



Figure 4 also shows that around half of children aged 10-12 who use the internet at home say they have a profile on Facebook, Bebo or MySpace (47%)<sup>16</sup>. Compared to 2009, children aged 10-12 are now more likely to have a profile on at least one of these three sites (47% vs. 35%).

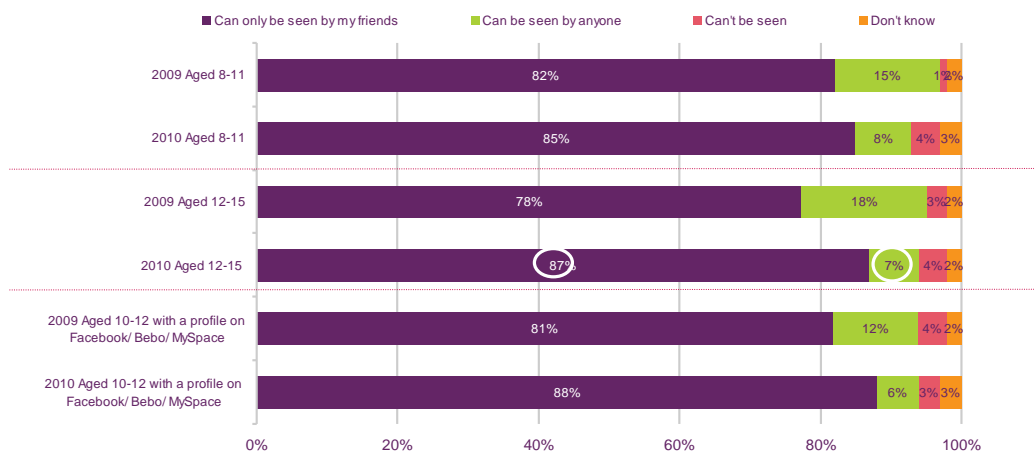
**Figure 4: Children with an active social networking site profile, by age: 2009 and 2010**



NQP29A/ NQC19- Which different social networking sites do you have a page or profile on? (spontaneous responses, multi coded)  
 Base: Parents of children aged 5-7 and children aged 8-15 who use the internet at home (343 aged 5-7 in 2010, 581 aged 8-11 in 2009, 597 aged 8-11 in 2010, 645 aged 12-15 in 2009, 665 aged 12-15 in 2010, 487 aged 10-12 in 2009, 511 aged 10-12 in 2010) - significance testing shows any changes between 2009 and 2010  
 Source: Ofcom research, fieldwork carried out by Saville Rossiter-Base in April to May and September to October 2010

As to the visibility of children’s social networking site profiles, a similar proportion of both 8-11s and 12-15s with an active social networking site profile say that their profile can be seen only by their friends (85% for 8-11s and 87% for 12-15s), or that their profile can be seen by anyone (8% for 8-11s and 7% for 12-15s). Compared with 2009, 12-15s are now more likely to have set their profile to be viewed only by friends (87% vs. 78%) and less likely to let it be seen by anyone (7% vs. 18%). There has been no change in the types of settings used by 8-11s since 2009.

**Figure 5: Visibility of social networking site profiles, by age: 2009 and 2010**



QC20 – And do you know if this profile can be seen by other people?  
 Base: Children aged 8-15 who have a social networking site profile that is currently active (129 aged 8-11 in 2009, 153 aged 8-11 in 2010, 442 aged 12-15 in 2009, 507 aged 12-15 in 2010, 177 aged 10-12 with a profile on Facebook/MySpace/Bebo in 2009, 236 aged 10-12 with a profile on Facebook/ Bebo/ MySpace in 2010) - significance testing shows any change between 2009 and 2010  
 Source: Ofcom research, fieldwork carried out by Saville Rossiter-Base in April to May and September to October 2010

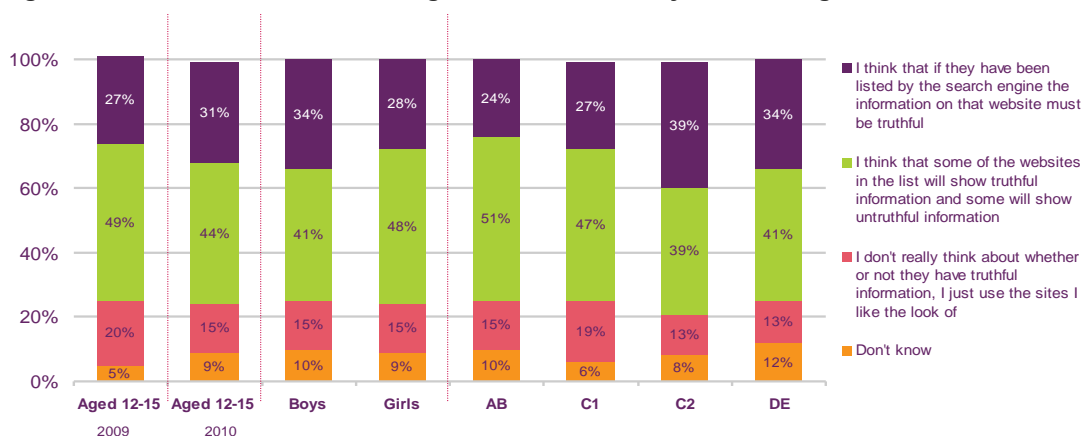
<sup>16</sup> This group of children is of particular interest as the minimum age for setting up a profile on Facebook/ Bebo/ MySpace is 13. Rather than looking at all children aged under 13 with profiles on Facebook/ Bebo/ MySpace, we have chosen to look at a subset - those children aged 10-12 with a profile on at least one of these sites.

We also attempt to measure children’s critical understanding of the internet. For example, children aged 12-15 who ever use search engines (94% of all home internet users) were asked about the truthfulness of information that was returned by the search engine. Children were asked which of the following statements is closer to their opinion:

- I think that if they have been listed by the search engine the information on the website must be truthful.
- I think that some of the websites in the list will show truthful information and some will show untruthful information.
- I don’t really think about whether or not they have truthful information, I just use the sites I like the look of.

Slightly more than two in five children aged 12-15 (44%) make some type of critical judgement about search engine results, thinking that some of the sites returned will be truthful while others may not be. Three in ten children aged 12-15 (31%) believe that if a search engine lists information then it must be truthful and less than one in five (15%) don’t consider the veracity of results but just visit the sites they like the look of. Around one in ten children aged 12-15 (9%) are unsure.

**Figure 6: Children’s understanding of results listed by search engines: 2010**



NQC24 – Which one of these is the closest in your opinion about the truthfulness of the information in the websites that appear in the results pages? (prompted responses, single coded)  
 Base: Children 12-15 who ever use search engines to find out about other websites or search for information (313 aged 12-15 in 2009, 620 aged 12-15 in 2010, 317 boys aged 12-15, 303 girls aged 12-15, 151 AB, 188 C1, 124 C2, 157 DE) – significance testing shows any difference between 2009 and 2010 or by socio-economic group compared to all 12-15s.  
 Source: Ofcom research, fieldwork carried out by Saville Rossiter-Base in April to May and September to October 2010

We speak to parents about their perspective on their children’s media use; what concerns, if any, they have, their mediation strategies, and use of formal mechanisms to help their children stay safe online. Some of the results are set out below.

Our research shows that there are high levels of agreement and confidence from parents in terms of their attitudes towards trusting their child, the benefits of the internet, and whether their child has been taught about online safety at school. However, 48% of parents think their child knows more than them about the internet, rising to 70% of parents of 12-15s.

Three in ten parents of 5-15s (30%) who use the internet at home are very or fairly concerned that their child may be giving out personal details to inappropriate people, with concern increasing with the age of the child. The same is also true for parental concern about cyber-bullying: a majority of parents are not very or at all concerned (64%), although concern increases with the age of the child. Around one in four parents of 5-15s (26%) are concerned about the content of the websites their child visits, with a similar proportion (25%) also concerned about who their child is in contact with online. Both these figures have decreased since 2009.

Close to four in five parents of children aged 5 -15 who use the internet at home (78%) say they have put in place any rules about internet use. These rules are more common for children aged 5-7 (80%), or 8-11 (89%), than for children aged 12-15 (66%).

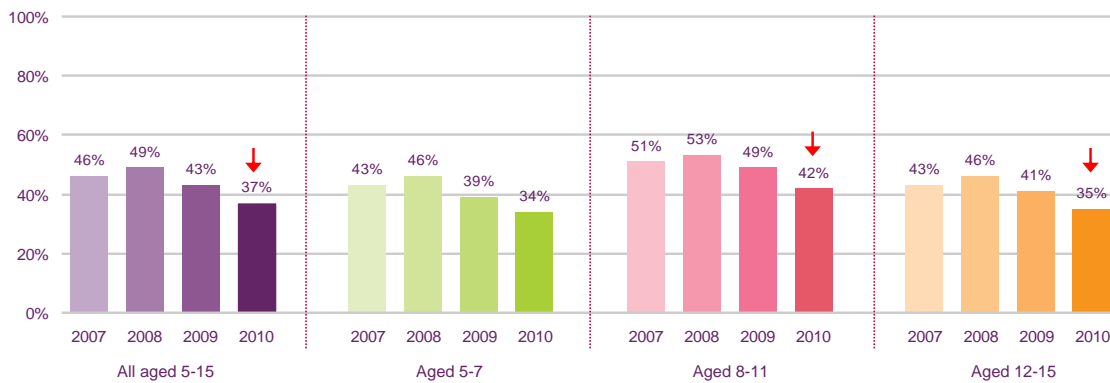
Among parents of children aged 5-15 who use the internet at home, there has been a decrease in the use of internet controls or filtering software (37% vs. 43%), which is driven by a decrease among 8-11s (42% vs. 49%) and 12-15s (35% vs. 41%).

The reasons given by parents for not setting internet controls or filtering software tend to differ by the age of the child. The main reason given by around half of all parents of 5-7s (52%) and 8-11s (54%) is that their child is normally supervised when using the internet. Among parents of 12-15s, close to seven in ten (68%) say they trust their child to be responsible, with nearly one in five (18%) stating that they do not set internet controls because their child is normally supervised.

Some parents do not use internet settings or filtering software, either because they don't know how to do this, or are not aware that it is possible. Being unaware of internet controls in either of these ways accounts for one in ten (9%) parents of 5-15s who do not have settings in place, and this is comparable across each of the three age groups of children.

Compared to 2009, parents of 8-11s are now more likely to state that controls are not in place because their child is normally supervised (54% vs. 44%) and parents of 8-11s are now less likely to be unaware of how to set such controls (9% vs.17%).

**Figure 7: Internet controls/ filtering software loaded, by age: 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010**



NQP26– Are there any controls set or is any software loaded to stop your child viewing certain types of websites? (prompted responses, single coded)  
 Base: Parents of children aged 5-15 who use the internet at home (2397 aged 5-15 in 2007, 1449 aged 5-15 in 2008, 1567 aged 5-15 in 2009, 1605 aged 5-15 in 2010, 477 aged 5-7 in 2007, 308 aged 5-7 in 2008, 340 aged 5-7 in 2009, 343 aged 5-7 in 2010, 875 aged 8-11 in 2007, 527 aged 8-11 in 2008, 582 aged 8-11 in 2009, 597 aged 8-11 in 2010, 1045 aged 12-15 in 2007, 614 aged 12-15 in 2008, 645 aged 12-15 in 2009, 665 aged 12-15 in 2010). Significance testing shows any changes between 2009 and 2010  
 Source: Ofcom research, fieldwork carried out by Saville Rossiter-Base in April to May and September to October 2010

This paper set out to provide an overview of Ofcom’s media literacy work, together with some findings from our children’s media literacy audit research. We publish full details of this research in our media literacy reports on our website<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> See <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/market-data-research/media-literacy-pubs/> for Ofcom’s media literacy audit reports.

# EAVI STUDIES ON MEDIA LITERACY IN EUROPE

Paolo Celot, Secretary General, European Association For Viewers' Interests

In 2009 EAVI coordinated a study on behalf of the European Commission DG Information Society, on *Assessing media literacy levels in Europe* providing a comprehensive view of the concept of media literacy.

In particular, the objectives of the study were to provide an understanding of how media literacy levels should be assessed in Europe; helping the Commission to carry out its obligation to report on media literacy levels in the EU 27 Member States; and to recommend the approach needed in order to implement concrete policies at a European Level.

The Study therefore sought to analyse, quantify and thereby measure the levels of media literacy across Europe. It achieved this by breaking media literacy as a concept down into its component parts so that available data could be collated and used appropriately.

EAVI also participated as a consortium partner in a previous Study on *Trends and approaches to media literacy in Europe* coordinated by the Barcelona Autonomia University again in the EU27. A third more technical study is currently coordinated by the Danish Technological Institute providing testing of the criteria and statistical validation. EAVI is again participating relying on the technical expertise of the other partners.

The 2009 EAVI Study is one of the most comprehensive across Europe to date in terms of its purpose and it is groundbreaking in its ambition and scope. Here are briefly outlined the challenge, process and findings of the above mentioned study which have been illustrated at the conference in Zagreb.

## Assessing Media Literacy Levels – Study Findings Outline

Measuring the competences necessary to interpret the flow, substance, value and consequence of media in all its forms was an ambitious undertaking because media literacy is a complex construction, expressing intrinsically many different ideas and streams of thoughts.

As a function of geography alone – not only twenty-seven countries and twenty different languages but also numerous different denotations changing depending their different applications, different concepts understood by equivalent terms and so on).

The Consortium was therefore required initially to identify and agree upon a definitive and reliable framework of ML. This involved analysing the full panoply of concepts and definitions of media literacy, and also their evaluation and comparison so as to arrive at a universally applicable and practical model.

However, and unsurprisingly perhaps, considering the multiplicity of approaches and definitions, a conclusive, universal interpretation proved unworkable – as it has done for more than twenty years.

As a result, the Consortium sought instead to measure separately the individual properties comprising media literacy, thereby more appropriately addressing the discipline, not only at its broadest, but also through the plurality and detail of its component parts. It was then decided that the Study should examine the connections between these properties, so as to translate them into indicators.

While some properties appeared to lend themselves better than others to measurement, others were immune to any mathematical reduction, and so any resulting pure mathematical model appeared to be unsuitable for the reliable analysis of media literacy. This is also because media literacy needs to be approached as a dynamic phenomenon, as a process of communicative interaction between different agents in a rapidly developing environment.

On this basis, the Study identified two dimensions within media literacy: one flowing from an individual's ability to utilise the media; the other informed by contextual and environmental factors. These are identified in the Study as Individual Competences and Environmental Factors.

The first dimension -Individual Competences is also separable as (a) Use – an individual technical skill; (b) Critical Understanding competence – fluency in comprehension and interpretation and (c) Communicative – the ability to establish relationships through the media.

The second dimension of Environmental Factors is defined as a set of contextual factors – which facilitate or hinder the development of the Individual competences - included the following areas (a) Media education, (b) Media Policy, (c) Media Availability, (d) Roles of the Media Industry and Civil society.

Within each field indicators have been identified. Although the data is incomplete, because much of it remains unavailable, the properties identified have been processed at European level so as to generated results sufficient for drawing preliminary conclusions.

The model proposed is not immune to legitimate criticism, since it takes its point of departure from concepts that are in a constant state of flux. But critics struggled either to reject the adopted method in its entirety or to identify an alternative approach better suited to the purpose.

Further information and the full study are available at: <http://www.eavi.eu/joomla/what-we-do/researchpublications/70-study-on-assessment-levels-of-ml-in-europe>

#### **Further outcomes and reflections were offered during the presentation:**

*Strategic importance of media literacy* - It is predicted that media in all its forms will increase between ten and one hundred times its current volume in the next decade. Therefore, in the current environment and in view of future innovation, it is no longer an advantage to be media literate; rather, it is a debilitating disadvantage not to be.

*Critical Understanding* - Critical understanding is the ultimate focus (and ambition) of media literacy. It should be identified as the key factor in the development of ML policies. This includes policies aimed at increasing competences for the understanding of media content and function; increasing knowledge about media context; and enabling sound judgment when adopting appropriate user behaviour.

*Citizens' engagement* - It is now widely acknowledged that media play a vital role in promoting democratic values. There is a painfully ironic dichotomy between the wealth of media availability and the informed use of it that is made by citizens. Therefore, it is imperative that citizens become media literate, so that they may participate in every aspect of public life and in the democratic process. They must be equipped with the skills to utilise, and therefore benefit from, media.

*Technology* - Media literacy needs to be considered central and distinct from the nearly exclusive emphasis previously given to technology. It should facilitate and extend access to ICT, with specific focus on the Internet. Policy in this field must, as a priority, encourage social inclusion and combat the digital divide.

*Public debate, role and responsibility of research* - In order to promote media literacy it must also promote public debate and awareness of media literacy through European, national and local information campaigns. Politicians and decision makers at large should be provided with the necessary relevant information. More systematic research on media literacy should be available, stimulating the development of conscientious studies.

*Civil Society and Media Industry Roles* - To foster a democratic culture and shared values the role of civil society organisations and related media literacy initiatives should be sustained. It should facilitate a more effective participation in the public sphere and allow for the activities of representative citizens' institutions. Finally, it should encourage active involvement by the media industry – especially audiovisual media. This should include literacy enhancing initiatives, as those already noted in the press. Attention should be given to mass media – including traditional and digital, public and private platforms, content and processes. The training of media professionals should also be considered a priority.

# DIGITAL MEDIA LITERACY AND THE USE OF FACEBOOK AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN CYPRUS

Tao Papaioannou, Department of Communications, University of Nicosia

Since their inception, social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter have become increasingly popular, particularly among young people. Analysis of youth media literacy would be incomplete without addressing the critical skills and competences required for participation in these social networks. Furthermore, among the diverse challenges that promotion of media literacy must face, researchers need to tackle the problems of measurement (Livingstone, 2011). The measurement problems are particularly attracting attention in the European Union that the Audiovisual Media Services Directive has demanded research aiming at proposing measurable criteria for media literacy and developing tools for the application of these criteria. This study intends to assess digital media literacy in youth in the context of Facebook use among high school students. Adopting the conception of two dimensions within media literacy, that of individual competences and environmental/contextual factors (Celot & Tornero, 2009), the study first examines individual competences reflected in the social practices on Facebook, and then it explores the role of media education - one of the contextual factors which impact the broad span of media literacy - in improving youth digital literacy.

## Digital Media Literacy

Research on digital media literacy, or rather digital literacy, offers a plethora of conceptions. On one hand, there are conceptual definitions that emphasize specific skills and techniques required for using any of the many and varied forms of digital media. Hence, standardized operational criteria have been developed which treat literacy as a standard for adoption in terms of certain tasks, performances and demonstrations of skills. On the other hand, there are also perspectives that focus on mastery of ideas, evaluation of information and expression of creativity. A sociocultural understanding of literacy argues that digital literacy should be treated as a plural concept in that digital literacies comprise a set of socially organized practices which make use of a symbol system and a technology for generating, communicating and negotiating meanings (Scribner & Cole, 1981). The plurality of digital literacies implies that digital literacy should be understood as “a shorthand for the myriad social practices and conceptions of engaging in meaning making mediated by texts that are produced, received, distributed, exchanged, etc., via digital codification” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2008, p. 5). The diversity of digital media practices cautions against treating uses of any digital medium as a specific singular type as they can take on multiple forms and for multiple purposes. Literacy does not simply demand knowledge of encoding and decoding texts through a digital medium but rather demands “applying this knowledge for specific purposes in specific contexts of use” (Scribner & Cole, 1981, p.236). Digital literacy also requires a broader understanding of the social and institutional contexts of communication, and how these contexts impact people’s experiences and practices (Buckingham, 2007; Luke, 2000). Digital literacy hence cannot be assessed in isolation from the immediate as well as the wider contexts in which it is situated. People do not create meaning individually but through their participation in “interpretive communities” (Buckingham, 2007, p. 38), which encourage and value particular forms of literacy.

One particular conception of media literacy which reflects such understanding is advanced in a study on assessment criteria for media literacy in the European Union (Celot & Tornero, 2009). Media literacy is broadly defined as “an individual’s capacity to interpret autonomously and critically the flow, substance, value and consequence of media in all its many forms” (p.4). Two dimensions are identified within this conception: individual competences and contextual factors. Individual competences refer to an individual’s capacity to exercise skills of cognitive processing, analysis and communication. They are further divided and represented by three key indicators including media use, critical understanding and communicative abilities. The indicator of media use evaluates the individual’s technical skills of media access and usage. Critical understanding examines the individual’s fluency of interpretation and evaluation of media content and its functioning, knowledge on media influence and media regulation, skills of critical search of information and critical judgments against personal data misuse. Finally, communicative abilities indicate the individual’s capacities for

establishing social relations, participating in the public sphere and producing creative content through media.

Celot and Tornero (2009) suggest that a set of contextual factors may affect individual competences and impact the overall level of media literacy. These factors include media education, media literacy policy/regulation, the media industry, civil society and the availability of media and information, core principles on freedom of expression and media pluralism. Having found a correlation between individual competence and these contextual factors, the authors conclude that “individual competence is a significant determining factor only when a certain threshold of environmental support has been met” (p.12).

### **Facebook and Assessment of Digital Literacy**

With the increasing popularity of Facebook among youth, it is becoming one of the dominating forms of online communication activities that youth engages in. Statistics on Facebook usage (“Facebook Statistics,” n.d.) show that about 20.6% of 500 million Facebook users worldwide are 13-17 years old. In Europe, 57% of 9-16 year olds have created profiles on social networking sites, and this percentage increases to 72% of 13-14 year olds and 81% of 15-16 year olds (Livingstone, Haddon, Gorzig & Olafsson, 2010). Facebook is the most widely used social networking site in Europe, attracting over 100 million visitors. In Cyprus, Facebook has 394,780 users, nearly 50% of the population. Respectively, 20% and 30% of these users are 13-17 years old and 18-24 years old. About 81.5% of university students have profiles on Facebook (Roussou and Papaioannou, 2011). Facebook, therefore, is incorporated in young people’s lives and provides an everyday context in which to examine literacy practices. Young people do not develop media literacy individually but through their involvement in “interpretive communities” such as Facebook, which may promote, ignore or discourage particular types of competences or skills. A context-oriented assessment approach allows for the identification of various literacy practices and their underlying communication processes within that context.

Adopting the conception of two dimensions within media literacy - individual competences and contextual factors - the present study extends it from media literacy to digital literacy and attempts to assess digital literacy in the context of Facebook use among Cypriot high school students. Although a set of contextual factors have been identified as playing a significant role in fostering media literacy in individuals, the present study chooses to only focus on media education which currently is not formally included in the curriculum of secondary education in Cyprus.

### **Key Findings**

Using random sampling, 300 public high school students, ages 14/15 – 18/19, and 100 public high school teachers participated respectively in a survey designed for this study. Results from the survey of the students indicate that 90% of them have profiles on Facebook. There is overlap among both the locations where high school students access Facebook and the devices with which they get connected. The majority (90%) use Facebook from home via a personal computer, most likely their own (92%), 37% have Facebook connected to a mobile device and 7% access Facebook everyday through their mobile phones. Using their own computer and mobile devices allows young people to access Facebook flexibly. This raises the concern that their online usage can entirely escape the attention of parents or teachers; it may further exasperate anxiety over multitasking among youth. This should drive policy makers to promote media education in such a way that educators need to teach young people digital literacy with a focus on planning, decision-making and self-protective skills.

Most students have the technical skills to use a range of basic applications on Facebook, but they seem less adept in undertaking more creative and participatory activities such as editing video clips (57%), creating groups to share content (30%) or building their own blog (21%).

Compared to their technical skills, the students demonstrate weaker critical understanding skills. Most students claim that they can distinguish clearly the types of content on Facebook (95%) and usually understand their purpose/function (93%), less students conduct critical search and evaluation of information. For example, when encountering on Facebook information which seems doubtful, only 57% verify it before making judgments. Regarding awareness of media influence and media regulation, 80% recognize that the media, including Facebook itself, influence what they do on Facebook. In contrast, most students are not informed about regulations on Facebook, nor do they engage in actions against violations of these rules and rights.

Young people appear to have a range of safety skills, but some are less in place than the others: 19% have public profiles, 16% usually accept all requests to be friends and 10% do not include their age in their profiles. Also, of the contact information included in their profiles, 50% give the name of school/place of work, and 30% provide E-mail address. Sending (12%) and posting (6%) sexual images/messages are still uncommon practices albeit there is much speculation that the Internet facilitates the exchange of sexual messages among teenagers. Furthermore, about a quarter of the students have sent/posted messages that made others look bad, made fun of others or would be considered hurtful or nasty. They indeed need to acquire the necessary critical safety skills as not to engage in inappropriate and risky behavior that could possibly result in harm.

High school students certainly use Facebook as a convenient means for establishing social relations and expanding their social circles. The average number of friends the students have is 340, predominantly Greek-Cypriots (93%) although friends of a variety of other nationalities are also present. The possible consequences of these online circles of contacts await further analysis. Most students participate in a range of online civic activities but they don't seem to actively contribute to the public sphere offline. The average number of online groups they belong to is 28, and these groups reflect a moderate degree of civic/social interest. They seem to participate superficially either in occasional philanthropic gestures or in activities that do not require much knowledge, effort or commitment. Very few try to tackle - as campaigners - either local or global problems. Researchers need to focus on the identification of evaluation criteria for online civic engagement and strategies to motivate youth to participate both online and offline.

Few students show interest in producing creative content such as uploading articles/essays they wrote or artistic work they produced or having their own blog. If Facebook truly represents a participatory, self-expressive opportunity for most young people rather than the self-motivated few, it is important that educators along with policy makers meet the challenge of incorporating such activities into young people's lives through actively promoting them in educational and civic contexts and in popular media.

Perceptions of media education among students indicate ignorance and bias. Most (90%) do not know whether the government has policies on media education in high school. Although 80% think that they need media education and that they need more formal, reliable sources of information and advice, their primary interest in media education is to improve their technical skills.

The results from the teacher's survey suggest that the teachers seem to be overly confident about the technical skills and communicative abilities their students have, which may result in an under appreciation of the value of media education in students. For example, 54% of the teachers believe that their students have their own blog, 15% believe that most of their students use Facebook to express their opinions on political, cultural or social issues and 62% believe that most of their students use Facebook to express their creativity. Statistics on comparative questions answered by students are consistently much lower.

The teachers think that their students have relatively much weaker critical understanding skills, and their estimations are fairly comparable to the results from the survey of the students with a few exceptions. About 15% of the teachers think that most of their students have sufficient knowledge about regulations on Facebook compared to 7% reported by the students. Overall, only 8% of the teachers think that most of their students are using Facebook safely while the students demonstrate much stronger safety skills in the survey results.

Finally, when asked about the role of media education in improving literacy, 85% of the teachers believe that there is a need in their schools to teach students about new media/technologies, and 84% believe that teachers in their schools need to be trained on new media/technologies. The teachers also identified issues which they believe may have negative effects on students. These include blurred notions of trust (not necessarily safety) and privacy, decline in academic performance, decrease in offline socialization, online bullying, lack of critical judgment skills, excessive use of Facebook and overly demanding consumer mentality. Many of these issues are further discussed by survey participants as possible themes in a media education course.

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# WHY DOES SOCIETY NEED MEDIA LITERACY?

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## Consumer culture and strategies of regulation for children and the media

Until recently the target of commercial corporations has been *teenagers* but nowadays the so called "*tweens*"<sup>18</sup> segment has acquired the status of a powerful market. There is a general agreement amongst researchers that the *tween* concept associates pre-teens (8-12 years old) to consumption. But why do children become more and more important to corporations? First of all there is a trend in western developed societies to persuade children to spend their pocket money and secondly, market research studies show that children can influence their family buying process (Tufte 2007: 94).

This kind of economical and political environment raises questions about how this commodity culture impacts the children identity development and their sense of community (Livingstone & Drotner, 2008: 1). The use of consumer products as "communicators" (Featherstone, 1991: 84), as cultural symbols and not as utilities, determines how children represent themselves and their peers. The children entertainment culture has its own aesthetics: it is funny, frenetic, fantastic and colourful. Visual communication prevails over textual and commercial messages aimed to children are so consequently created (Kenway, J. & Bullen E., 2007: 169). To capture children attention and to establish long-lasting relationships with them, the commercial messages make use of entertainment but also of education in order to address parents. From the industry point of view, the integrated marketing communications approach is very cost-effective in digital process, since messages are created once and massively distributed on the Internet and mobile phone networks.

Children usually do not recognize the persuasive intent underlying advertising until around 7 or 8 years old. To process advertisements effectively, the viewer must recognize that its source has other perspectives and interests than those they appear to have (Scantlin, 2006).

Therefore, one important research question is to investigate the way children from different social positions deal with the saturated "brand sponsored" media environment, in articulation with the ambitions of our society.

## Conceptualizations of media literacy

The increase of Internet usage created the need to redefine the concept of literacy to incorporate technology, media and popular culture. And the growing influence of branded media in popular culture brings brand literacy to the discussion (Bengtsson & Firat, 2006):

*Brand literacy is the ability of the consumer to decode the strategies used in marketing practices in introducing, maintaining and reformulating brands and brand images, which then, further enables the consumer to engage with these processes within their cultural settings.*

Advertisement is one of the possible tactics used by brands. The distinction between an advertisement and *branded* media is that the first one is a paid commercial message in a particular medium, while the second one "immerses" a brand into the medium: a movie, a game scene or a character. Therefore, *branded* media is a meaningful and shared experience amongst the peer group: a place for fun, for being together (even when physically distant) and for growing-up.

## How are the ambitions held for media literacy framed?

In Europe, the Bangemann Report (1994) has defined the Information Society as an important step towards the development of a European Information Economy. The competitive advantage of such an economy has been based on the integration of historically separated industries: computers, telecommunications and content distribution. The Internet, socially and technically, symbolizes such convergence and adds an increasing complexity to contact and content regulation.

In the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) the "need for regulation" is justified in the first place by the need to allow free competition amongst European media industry players (Little, 2008), and not by the recognition of consumers and minors' rights. The AVMSD differentiates linear (TV) services and non-linear (on-demand) services. The restrictions for non-linear services are practically

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<sup>18</sup> The word "tween" was used in first place in 1987, in an article of the "Marketing and Media Decisions" journal.

non-existent when compared to linear services, as stated in article 12 of the EU Audiovisual and Media Policies<sup>19</sup>:

*Member States shall take appropriate measures to ensure that on-demand audiovisual media services provided by media service providers under their jurisdiction which might seriously impair the physical, mental or moral development of minors are only made available in such a way as to ensure that minors will not normally hear or see such on-demand audiovisual media services.*

The above definition of non-linear (media) is vague, poorly frames the minor's protection and leads to different understandings and priorities for media literacy amongst EC Member States.

According to a recent report from the Portuguese regulator (*ERC - Entidade Reguladora para a Comunicação Social*), Portugal is taking its first steps in the media literacy arena. As stated in its preface, as a result of a study entitled "Media Education in Portugal", conducted by the CECS research centre, the recognition of media literacy as a dimension of citizenship is the main goal of the 2007/65/CE Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2007 (Pinto, Pereira, Pereira, & Ferreira, 2011).

Article 26 of the 2007/65/CE Directive establishes that until December 2011 and every three years thereafter, the Commission shall submit to the European Parliament, the Council and the European Economic and Social Committee, a report on the application of this Directive, including the issues raised by recent technological developments, levels of media literacy and an assessment on advertising targeted to children in all Member States. The EC media literacy definition is about consumers' rights and protection:

*« ...'Media literacy' refers to skills, knowledge and understanding that allow consumers to use media effectively and safely. Media-literate people are able to exercise informed choices, understand the nature of content and services and take advantage of the full range of opportunities offered by new communications technologies. They are better able to protect themselves and their families from harmful or offensive material.»<sup>20</sup>*

In articulation with that "view" of media literacy, the Portuguese National curriculum for Citizenship of the Elementary School recently added education in media and responsible consumption as a competency goal. However, in practice, elementary school teachers are trapped between their traditional competencies and what they should be in contemporary society.

### **How can the ambitions be operationalised into practical measures?**

The available measures of media literacy have accordingly been directed to the goals and conceptualization of its protagonists. The European Commission has been taking a few actions that address media literacy, namely investing in research and training. The investment in research has been mainly directed towards diagnosing media literacy: how many do have access to computers and Internet? How many have the required knowledge to contribute to a digital economy? What do children do "inside" the digital landscape? What are the risks and opportunities? How to protect children?

The Safer Internet Programme is one example of the articulation of the academic views with the society concerns and has been producing important results. Given that each European Member State has the power to adopt its concrete measures, further developments on this matter depend on the priorities of the national political agenda.

The evaluation of outcomes is a difficult task. Since media literacy has several conceptualizations and practices, the idea of comparing what is different without context is of little value. Therefore, clear goals and measures should be stated in a manner that can be implemented by society. It should happen neither in a top-down approach nor in a disconnected and chaotic way. The involvement of all stakeholders is crucial. As demonstrated in the next section, the evaluation of today's media literacy is a complex issue and needs more academic research and interdisciplinary skills.

### **Methodological issues in a children's media literacy programme: results from an empirical study<sup>21</sup>**

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<sup>19</sup> Source: AVMSD - Protection of minors, available at

[http://ec.europa.eu/avpolicy/reg/tvwf/protection/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/avpolicy/reg/tvwf/protection/index_en.htm) and accessed last time in 16/05/2011

<sup>20</sup> Source: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2007:332:0027:0045:EN:PDF>

<sup>21</sup> This study is partially funded by CICANT-UHLT, under the ComuniMEDIA (PTDC/CCI-COM/109887/2009)

This particular study was conducted in the context of a Media Education and Citizenship programme aimed to 8-10 years old at an elementary private school. A total of 28 children (in two separate groups) attended the classes. The children's parents have above average education and their children have a rich media environment at home and school.

The content programme was supported by a website and was devoted to media in a broad sense: as news, as entertainment and as *branded* media. The research activity had several stages.

The 1<sup>st</sup> stage consisted in the design of the media literacy programme, articulating the Portuguese national curriculum for citizenship with the educators' views.

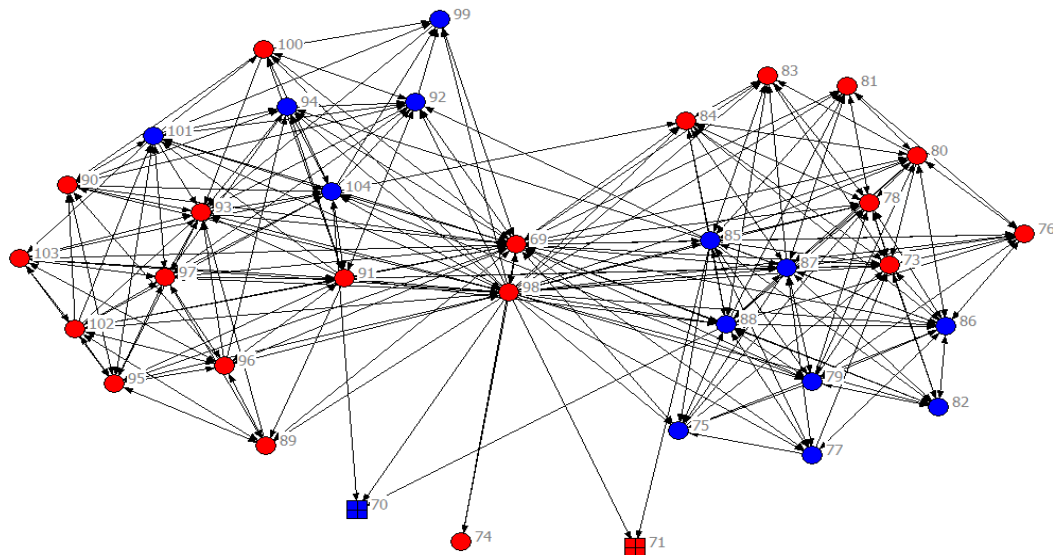
The 2<sup>nd</sup> stage covered the understanding of the "activity" - what could motivate children in accessing and using a website in their school context? The outcome consisted of several homepage proposals created by children during a participative Web design session.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> stage, the website was introduced in the children community, and participant observation took place from October 2009 to June 2010. The instrument used to the 1<sup>st</sup> assessment on brand literacy was a script with a collection of images gathered on the Internet, all targeted to children of those ages and social condition: a cereal brand (CHOCAPIC), the logotype of Portuguese Ministry of Education, the logotype of a Portuguese portal for kids (SAPOKids), a Portuguese newsmagazine (VISÃO Júnior), two TV *advertainments* from the Disney channel website (the most preferred TV channel of those children), and a fraudulent advertisement that used to appear in websites targeted to children. This instrument was very useful to measure the level of image recognition in relation to its source: pure commercial or pure educational. The entertainment dimension could be seen as a layer that could be added to both sources. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> assessment the same script was used during an individual interview with every child. The objective was to find out if children wanted to change his/her views about images and if those changes could be related to a learning process at school.

The participant observation generated important insights about individual and group media usages, namely their strategies to online security and privacy and participation. It could be observed genre differences and peer group influence on children preferred media and brands. Another conclusion is that the children prefer games developed by global corporations, and that the contents of educational games available from Portuguese Institutions were considered too childish and uninteresting from their perspective. This is an important indicator for society: while the educational content does not have the same "quality" as entertainment content, they will hardly if ever use it. Therefore, educators will have the difficult role of restricting/controlling what is by "nature" a space of free access and use: the Internet.

The 4<sup>th</sup> stage consisted in a children focus group to evaluate the programme. The evaluation by children was very positive. When children were asked: - If the website "Amigos" (friends) was a person... how he/she would be? - the answers were as follows: "A friend", "with a lot of information", "he/she helps us", "abnormally normal" (in a sense that it is not usual), "he/she knows us and...a lot of things", "he/she is funny", "he/she likes playing games...".

The last phase is in progress and consists in analysing the data generated by the community interaction. This is only possible with the aid of Social Network Analysis (SNA) software. The SNA analysis is extremely valuable to characterise social roles (friend of) and actions (talks to, initiates conversation with) and to evaluate intra-group relationships.



**Figure 1- Children Community Sociogram**

Figure 1 depicts the sociogram graph obtained from the traffic generated by email messages that children exchanged during the programme. Each number represents a member of the community. The left side represents class A and the right side class B. The majority of the exchanges are between classmates, and at the centre one can see (not surprisingly) the researcher in charge of the programme (#69), but the much more relevant fact that one of the girls (#98) acted as a *liaison*. This is an interesting conclusion that the SNA tool uncovered, which shows the advantage of combining qualitative and quantitative methods.

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# MEDIA LITERACY FOR ALL? ON THE INTELLECTUAL AND POLITICAL CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING MEDIA LITERACY POLICY

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## From one literacy to many

Look back several centuries. Print literacy introduced vast inequalities in access to knowledge and, therefore, power, because the means of communication demanded substantial education from its public. Policy makers of the eighteen and nineteen centuries did eventually respond: to accompany the printed word, they invented the school.<sup>23</sup> Fast forward a century or two, to see that broadcasting vastly reduced this literacy requirement by communicating easily with all. But it brought a major disadvantage: unlike for writing and, to a limited degree, even printing, the tools for broadcasting were all but inaccessible to the public, positioning the public as receivers but not communicators. Digital media share with printing the disadvantage of introducing significant new demands of media literacy in comprehension, navigation and evaluation. Digital media also share printing's advantage over broadcasting, namely that the public can create messages as well as receive them, and this, too, increases the requirements of media literacy for their use. But we lack – as yet – the advent of new institutions of education and learning e them. So, how can society provide access to media and digital literacies for all citizens?

Although the task of defining media literacy and measuring media literacy have both proved difficult and much contested,<sup>24</sup> these appear easy tasks compared with implementing media literacy policies so as to ensure that European citizens have access to media literacy tools and resources. Matters of definition and measurement are also subjects on which I, as a researcher, can be much more enthusiastic: media literacy is an unequivocal positive – who could be against it? Implementing media literacy is, however, more of a sorry tale, and the way forward is also more political. Across Europe and beyond, there are many creative efforts to improve the media literacy of a particular group in a particular city. Such initiatives generate much excitement and, for those involved, can be stimulating and fruitful. However, they are rarely scalable to a national or international level. And though many positive claims are made for such initiatives, they are rarely evaluated independently. At the same time, the field of media literacy is characterised by a very considerable gap between aims and implementation, for the means are generally insufficient for the ends.

What policy can possibly address the changes in society whereby media are used as the infrastructure for every domain of daily life? From the prosaic but vital tasks of locating train timetables, doing the weekly shop or completing tax returns to more elevated if ordinary civic activities of finding trustworthy information or following the news, to the increasingly necessary task of updating skills ready for a fast-changing, 'flexible' labour market, to familiar social pleasures of entertainment, chatting with friends, forming relationships or staying in touch with far-flung relatives – all of which were once unthinkingly public activities but now occur over channels in private ownership to, finally, the grandest aims of speaking out and being heard in a democratic culture. But address these changes it must, for those without media literacy – just as for those lacking print literacy in past decades – risk economic, social, psychological and political disadvantage, even exclusion.

## Means and ends

Let us think clearly about the relation between means and ends. If the means (policies, engaged policy actors and, especially, resources) can be increased, it becomes easier to make media literacy accessible to all citizens. On the other hand, if the means are not in practice increased, then media literacy can only be sufficient if the ends, the goals, are reduced. These goals are often grandiose - media literacy is held to be vital for democracy, participation and active citizenship, for the knowledge

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<sup>22</sup> An earlier version of this paper, entitled "How can we make media literacy easier for each citizen to access?" was presented to IHECS and European Parliament, Brussels, 2nd and 3rd December, 2010.

<sup>23</sup> Luke, C. (1989). *Pedagogy, Printing and Protestantism: The Discourse of Childhood*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

<sup>24</sup> Livingstone, S. (2004). Media literacy and the challenge of new information and communication technologies. *Communication Review*, 7, 3-14.

economy, competitiveness and choice, and for lifelong learning, cultural expression and personal fulfilment.

I will not argue that society should lower its expectations regarding the scope or nature of informed participation in and through media. This is, not least, because we have all of these expectations for education, and thus for print literacy, and so in a thoroughly mediated, networked, digital age, the same aims are surely appropriate for all media. Rather, I shall argue that the task of acquiring media literacy is unnecessarily burdened by the insufficient design, planning and provision of media services and providers – I here leave to one side the question of whether this is because such provision is merely thoughtlessly flawed or positively exploitative.

### **The role of the school**

I have suggested above that media literacy might be treated, in policy terms, as is print literacy - as a matter of education. Problematically, and unlike the case of education, media literacy educators lack an education system – this including not just schools, but the enforced participation of the entire population, and considerable state resources invested in curriculum development, teacher training, and more. One obvious answer, then, to the question of providing citizens' access to media literacy would be the properly resourced and properly enforced inclusion of media literacy – that new but vital skill for life, complementing reading, writing and arithmetic – in all schools.

This is surely the primary means by which our ambitious aims for media literacy should be achieved. And since this proposal is hardly new, a corollary – one of the more pessimistic questions raised in this paper – is the question of why governments and schools continue to be so very resistant to the thorough implementation of media based on technologies other than print within their classrooms? Is it a matter of prejudice, a lack of imagination, of training and resources or of political will?

But even if all children were taught media literacy in school, we would still face some significant problems in providing media literacy for all. The first problem concerns the pace of technological change. Not only can we not send today's adults back to school but neither will today's children find what they learn today to be relevant to the technological environment of tomorrow. To educate children in the ways of the media is, therefore, not enough – a contrast with print literacy, where early education lasted a lifetime. But how can media literacy programmes reach adults? Especially, how can media literacy programmes reach adults in a way that they could – if the will were there – reach children, in other words, in a way that is resourced, inclusive and sustained rather than, as for much awareness-raising, merely ad hoc, partial and unsustainable.

### **The role of media**

Ironically, it is only our system of mass communication that can, with very few exceptions, reach everyone. In other words, if the education system cannot reach adults, the very system that poses the media literacy challenges must, perhaps, be the one also to overcome them. But can this occur? If media literacy education is to be publicly provided – for instance via public information messages or awareness campaigns – it will be prohibitively expensive. Indeed, given the cost issues, most government campaigns to raise awareness or understanding are only ad hoc, short-lived and often disappointing in their potential to change behaviour.

It should be noted, that some media have voluntarily taken on some media literacy provision, especially among Europe's public service broadcasters but including some private providers also, sometimes as part of their corporate social responsibility remit. But, if private media corporations are to take on the task of raising media literacy for all citizens, in a sustainable and inclusive manner, then there is a very considerable job of persuasion to be done to overcome significant vested interests. Why, one might ask, should the media cooperate to demystify their processes? To tell citizens what they do with their personal data? To clearly identify sponsored content? To make advertising less persuasive? To make transparent who owns what, who is responsible for what, how to complain or get redress?

### **Knowledge gaps and inequalities**

However, even if the media did take on this responsibility to raise the media literacy levels of adults, a significant problem remains. For, short of a politically implausible system of enforcement, adults can only be reached if they choose to be reached, or if they are in some sense available. The problem is that any voluntary system of informal, or ad hoc or lifelong learning, however well-intentioned, however inclusive in its address, tends to exacerbate rather than overcome inequalities. As the knowledge gap hypothesis has long shown, the already-advantaged (whether through economic or cultural or other resources) take up new knowledge disproportionately, leaving the



already-disadvantaged to spiral further behind.<sup>25</sup> Beyond voluntary take up of voluntary provision by the media, if society is to overcome the knowledge gap problem so that digital disadvantage does not further compound already-existing forms of social disadvantage, media literacy resources should be especially targeted at those lack them, even those who do not realise they may want or need them. That's an interesting challenge – of principle as well as resources and practice. But it must surely be undertaken and sustained.

So, media literacy provided by schools could reach children if the political will existed. And media literacy promoted by the media themselves could reach most adults if the commercial will existed. In both cases, it is likely that state action would be required to ensure that the means matched up to society's aims for media literacy – first, in terms of regulation and enforcement (of schools, of industry) and second, in terms of compensatory provision so that positive policies to promote media literacy do not end up as negative policies that further disadvantage the already disadvantaged. This paragraph is, surely, already full of big 'ifs'! But there is a further challenge to consider before I conclude.

### **Technological complexity and the media literacy burden**

The complexity of technological change raises some distinctive challenges of its own. Practically, a fusion is required between those who can communicate and those who design and understand the new tools of information and communication. Recent history has taught us that it is difficult to turn teachers into technological experts and it is difficult to turn technologists into effective educators. But perhaps we have posed each with an impossible task, for we have treated the knowledge implications of the new technological platforms and services (i.e. the nature of the media literacy that citizens require) as entirely separate from the educational process of elucidating the provenance and mode of operation of these platforms and services, along with the opportunities and risks they afford (i.e. the delivery of media literacy that citizens require).

We could think about this differently. One way forward is to recognise that new intermediaries are vital. Consumer organisations, most notably, can combine the necessary legal and technical expertise with a vigorous defence of ordinary people's interests. They can, therefore, provide a trusted source for media literacy advice and guidance, and they can campaign for digital environments that are sufficiently interpretable, navigable, transparent and fair.

But the point is not only a practical one – requiring some new agencies, and new alliances, to deliver media literacy to all citizens – but it is also a fundamental point of definition, or, to be precise, of mutual definition. Media design and media literacy can be considered as reverse sides of the same coin. The more complex and, especially, the more 'illegible' the media environment becomes, the greater the task of media literacy. Conversely, the clearer, the easier to use, the better designed the media environment, the less daunting the task of learning how to use it effectively. Ideally, technological innovation would embed in its very design and regulation the knowledge-based needs and practices of its users.

Consider a simple example. In Britain, parents are newly faced with the task of teaching their children which types of downloading are illegal, in a context where even the lawyers are arguing. If parents and children fail to gain this knowledge, notwithstanding the ill-designed interfaces, online guidance and other support services available, they may have their internet connection cut. Similarly, having long taught their children to distinguish advertising from programming in a clearly designed and highly regulated broadcast environment, they are now meant to teach their children the same in the online environment.<sup>26</sup> Since the design features are (deliberately) confusing instead of helpful, and since the regulation to ensure content is fair and transparent is largely absent, it may appear that the media literacy task is increased. In other words, difficulties experienced by citizens are being framed as media literacy tasks when an alternative description would point to failures of design, provision or regulation.

### **Planning for risk**

Technological change not only brings new demands, and new problems, but these can be, and should be, planned for. It is no longer a surprising and unintended outcome that people take up technologies unpredictably, use them only partially, abuse them on occasion, or appropriate them in

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<sup>25</sup> Bonfadelli, H. (2002). The Internet and knowledge gaps: A theoretical and empirical investigation. *European Journal of Communication*, 17(1), 65-84.

<sup>26</sup> Fielder, A., Gardner, W., Nairn, A., & Pitt, J. (2007). *Fair game? Assessing Commercial Activity on Children's Favourite Websites and Online Environments*. London: National Consumer Council and Childnet International.

ways that make sense to their user not their creator.<sup>27</sup> So, it must be recognised that the very provision of a new digital resource brings with it a new risks of misuse, non-use and abuse. For example, if a new form of online health advice is introduced, it simultaneously introduces a new media literacy requirement: people must judge it trustworthy and reliable, or not, in a complex and confusing online environment; this raises new risks of misuse that did not exist in the days when medical advice can be derived only from a doctor or an encyclopaedia. The same new source of health advice creates new risks of non-use: people who lack internet access are newly disadvantaged, without a source to turn to when the doctor's surgery or library are closed. And it creates a new risk of abuse also: a rival provider may set up a misleading or exploitative source of 'health advice', raising the new task in which people must protect themselves or be protected against this.

Blogging or other creative forms of user-generated content provide another example of ways in which new digital opportunities increases the task of media literacy, if the risks of misuse, non-use or abuse are to be avoided. Now that these new communicative tools exist, the majority of the population is suddenly judged to 'lack' key skills, while the minority (for it is only a minority that creates and uploads content online) takes advantage – expressing themselves, being heard, attracting attention, perhaps even making money or having influence. In relation to risks, the *EU Kids Online* network which I direct, funded by the Safer Internet Programme, found that the so-called "digital natives" lack some key skills that they did not need even five years ago and that, perhaps no-one has taught them. For example, a substantial number of those who communicate online do not know how to block abusive people; similarly, a substantial number of those who use social networking services don't know how to manage their privacy settings.<sup>28</sup> Since their digital literacy needs are rather precisely tied to their digital activities and the specificities of the digital interfaces they engage with, for this reason, many rightly look to the providers of contents and services to reduce the media literacy burden and to enhance the skills of their users.

## Conclusion

I have argued that a range of key stakeholders should take action to ensure that media literacy is accessible to all citizens. Some of these actions would serve to embed the means by which our ambitions for media literacy may be met. The thorough incorporation of media literacy objectives within the school curriculum. A commitment to elucidate, explain and support the public as they engage with both publicly and privately provided media themselves. Both of these will require state support if they are deliberately to include and provide for those who are relatively disadvantaged in society. Further, some of these actions that are required should serve to reduce the burden of media literacy, particularly as regards complex functional, technical, contractual and legal forms of knowledge, by improving the design and management of digital interfaces, contents and services. It is crucial to find a means of limiting the potentially escalating requirements of media literacy and, therefore, the potentially escalating burden on individuals. Otherwise media literacy will never be accessible by all.

Finally, I have argued against the convenient, even complacent temptation to let things happen by themselves. For although enthusiastic youth, along with some enthusiastic adults, will surely continue to push forward in their adoption and use of, and even their creative experimentation with the changing media environment, the result will be more unequal – which matters, given the considerable benefits on offer, and more risky – which also matters, given the considerable harms that exist. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that, as a society we started off on the wrong foot as regards media literacy, being so confident that people would just 'pick it up' that we fooled ourselves that they did. After all, people's homes are full of digital technology, they have indeed signed up for contracts and services of complex kinds, and they say they do not expect the 'nanny state' to look out for them. But they have, along the way, learned to ignore privacy policies, sign away their rights, put up with suboptimal services, accept incomprehensible terms and conditions, and remain in happy ignorance regarding who controls their personal data. We are beginning to see the costs of this casual approach: if we wish for a truly media literate citizenry, we must not only add to their knowledge but we must undo some of these 'illiterate' practices.

The media, and therefore media literacy, are no longer to be relegated to the domain of leisure and entertainment. Rather, they have become infrastructural, underpinning our work as well as family,

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<sup>27</sup> Silverstone, R. (2005). *Media, technology and everyday life in Europe: from information to communication*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

<sup>28</sup> Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., and Ólafsson, K. (2010). *Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Initial findings*. LSE, London: EU Kids Online.

public as well as private life, civic as well as personal domains. Go into any household in Europe and you'll find a confusion of kit and cables, contracts and incomprehensible or suboptimal contracts, confusion about what plugs into what, how things work and how to complain or get help. We would not expect this for the provision of water or electricity or transport. And, like those infrastructural services too, we should not leave it to individuals to figure out how to cope by themselves, nor should we leave them to bear the cost of getting it wrong. So, the implementation of media literacy, to get access for all, is a political issue. That makes it difficult for researchers to promote. But, as a matter of political will, it is not beyond the bounds of possibility for Europe.

# DOMAINS OF DIGITAL LITERACY LEARNING: BEYOND EASY OPPOSITIONS

Kirsten Drotner, University of Southern Denmark and DREAM

## **How are the ambitions held for media literacy framed?**

The frameworks for media literacy and the ambitions held for its outcomes are undergoing change in terms of societal aims, technological means and political discourses. Media literacy speaks to a number of tensions within and between each of these changing frameworks. Mapping these changing frameworks and their related tensions offers an important inroad to operationalising the ambitions held for media literacy and to implementing procedures for its advancement both in academic and practical terms.

*Changing societal aims* is to do with posing the key question: why does society need literacy? While answers in the past have centred on defining media literacy in relation to citizenship and critical understanding of self and society, current and future answers could usefully be offered with a view to the pervasive discourse on the network society, knowledge society, innovation society, learning society and similar terms. With different theoretical and policy inflections, all of these concepts point to the fundamental ways in which societies depend on immaterial forms of production, of the shaping, sharing and storing of (new forms of) knowledge. Much of this production takes the form of handling meaning-making signs (numbers, images, sound, text); and an increasing part of this handling is technologically mediated. Hence, media literacy may be defined as the individual and collective capacity to handle mediated signs so as to be able to act in society in a number of capacities. Citizenship is one, consumption is another. But key to the aims of the knowledge society is the central role played by media literacy for the labour market, for gaining, holding and improving employment competencies.

*Changing technological means* is to do with the way in which technological digitization offers and demands new inflections between ICT, media and telecommunications. In tandem with these technological changes are processes of communicative globalization (internet, satellite, GPS) which serve to selectively advance instant, distant and interactive forms of communication and collaboration.

Taken together, the combined changes in terms of digitization and globalisation make for a more inclusive definition of media literacy, namely one that integrates traditional media and ICT, or computer, competencies. It also makes for a more socio-cultural focus, since practices are very much a joint affair both at work, in education and in less formalised contexts of use. Last but not least, the combined changes make for increasing attention being paid to differential forms of use rather than gradations in uptake.

*Changing policy discourses* is to do with overarching transformations in the wider contexts within which media literacy, however defined, is to find its rationale and implementation. Seen from a European perspective, the EU's growth strategy for the coming decade, *Europe 2020*, encapsulates these policy discourses. According to its homepage, "we want the EU to become a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy (European Commission 2011). Obviously, these keywords, when tied to economic growth, offer a rich repertoire of tensions, some of which speak very centrally to media literacy as defined above: part of the term may be associated with economic employability ("smart"), another part with the societal resources ("inclusive"), and yet another part with consumption ("sustainable"). The changing policy context, and its inherent tensions, is decisive for the ways in which media literacy may be operationalised and practised.

## **How can the ambitions be operationalised into practical measures?**

We need to be precise about the aims in order to develop a definition of media literacy that is not only conceptually sound, but also workable in a range of practical implementations. Among the issues to be tackled is

- measures of regulation (transnational/national, state/industry, statutory/self-regulated) and retribution
- means of assessment (ex ante/ex post, qualitative/quantitative)
- evaluation of outcomes (in terms of e.g. learning, citizenship, employment)

**Will the use of such measures reveal genuine improvements over time in the audience's media literacy?**

This is the 10.000 dollar question and hardly possible to answer without knowing the contexts and aims within which these measures are developed and implemented.

**How best can we promote dialogue across academic, policy and industry stakeholders?**

Sustained dialogues characterised by being: goal-directed, interdisciplinary, having a changing set of representatives, being accountable to clearly defined parameters, securing national as well as transnational policy dialogue. The Expert Group has proved a fine beginning to this ongoing process.

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# BIOGRAPHIES

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Prof. Dr. Ben Bachmair was until his retirement in 2008 Professor of pedagogy, media education and media enhanced learning at the University of Kassel, Germany. Currently he is visiting professor at the Institute of Education, University of London. He is a founding member of the London Mobile Learning Group and a member of the German public regulation board for television and the internet. His specialisms include: mass communication and education, media and learning, mobile learning, media socialization and media reception, media within the cultural development, to which he has published widely.

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Paolo is founding member and Secretary General of EAVI - a not-for-profit international organization based in Brussels. Over the last twenty years, Paolo has accumulated a considerable international experience in the media, working for long periods in London, Milan and Brussels for both public and private broadcasters, as well as for television advertising agencies and collaborating with various public institutions. Paolo is an economist and a European affairs advisor specialised in the media sector. He is an expert on media literacy for the European Commission, a member of the Group of experts for public service media at the CoE, and a member of the Active Citizenship Group of the EC. Paolo also contributed to publications and studies on media and citizens related issues.

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Kirsten Drotner is Dr.Phil. and professor at the Dept. of Literature, Culture and Media Studies, University of Southern Denmark. Her research areas include media history, audience studies, methodology, and youthful media culture. Among her 22 (co-)authored and (co-)edited books are *English Children and Their Magazines, 1751-1945* (Yale UP 1988), *Researching Audiences* (Arnold 2003), *The International Handbook of Children, Media and Culture* (Sage 2008), *Informal learning and Digital Media* (Cambridge Scholars' Publishing 2008) and *Digital Content Creation: Creativity, Competence, Critique* (Peter Lang 2010), just as she has contributed to a number of anthologies and scholarly journals. Over the years, she has served in a number of counselling capacities on national, Nordic and wider European cultural, media and research committees, inc. four years' service as chair of the Danish Research Council for the Humanities. She is founding director of DREAM (Danish Research Centre on Education and Advanced Media Materials, 2004-) and currently national delegate to the SSH Programme Committee under EU's FP7.

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### **Jane Rumble**

Jane Rumble is Head of Media Research at Ofcom. She has over fifteen years' experience working in media and consumer research in the public and private sectors. Her previous roles include European Research Director for Walt Disney Company, and Group Director, Media research at AC Nielsen in New Zealand. Since joining Ofcom in 2007, Jane has led on a range of large scale research projects such as: Children's TV review (2007), Public Service Broadcasting review (2008), Accessing the Internet at home (2009), Digital Day (2010) - an overview of UK adults' and children's media and communication habits. Jane has worked on many media literacy research projects, including Children's and young people's access to online content (2009), How people assess online content and services (2009), Citizen's Digital Participation (2009). She is responsible for Ofcom's PSB research and media literacy programme. Her areas of interest are children's media behaviours and attitudes, and the changing nature of audiences' audio visual consumption habits.