CONNECT!ONS Med!aLit moments

In This Issue…

Community Media

Active participation by citizens. Local community engagement. Expanding media access to all. Empowerment through education. Tackling tough issues in communities. Freedom of speech. Storytelling. Citizen journalism. Understanding media and how it operates.

Where do all of these important undertakings – essential to media literacy -- happen? In community media centers around the U.S. and the world.

Radio, video, television, websites, social media -- all types of production work take place at community media centers. Increasingly, media literacy is finding its place as a respected discipline within community media, as a fundamental underpinning to the many outreach efforts that community media spawn both in the U.S. and abroad. Community media is seen as a "Third Sector" in the media ecosystem, providing a three-tier media landscape that includes public service, commercial and community media.

Since media production is essential to being media literate, community media centers provide ideal forums for exploring and teaching media literacy. At a National Youth Summit meeting during the 2015 U.S. Annual Conference of the Alliance for Community Media, held in Pasadena, CA, Aug. 12-14, media literacy figured prominently in work being done at facilities such as the YMCA of Long Beach's Youth Institute, which has replicated its model for youth media production in the U.S. and Canada. Community media centers are teaming up with local libraries and Maker Movement facilities to provide a wide-range of offerings, encouraging young and old to be active producers.

The history of community media in the U.S. goes back to the early 1970s when The Experimental Television Center was founded by Ralph Hocking, a professor at Binghampton University in New York. That Center focused on training local education and cultural groups, as well as citizens, on how to use the technology needed to produce video. A new exhibition on The Experimental Television Center is now being developed by Sarah Watson, chief curator of the Hunter College Art Galleries, in collaboration with the Rose Goldsen Archive of New Media Art at Cornell University. This exhibition presents a virtually invisible, but vitally important aspect of this history, which is marked by collaboration, hacker-technology and artistic liberation.

Yet today, community media centers, especially in the western U.S., are struggling at a time when the West is often depicted as a "media desert" where local news and production are increasingly unavailable. (See maps at http://alldigitocracy.org/?s=the+media+desert). Since 2005, (link to study https://www.benton.org/node/55372) more than 100 communities have lost their PEG (Public, Education, Government) Access Centers, with California being particularly hard hit, with more than 50 closures throughout the State.   (Please note: U.S. public television, the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), is part of the public service sector; PEG

television is part of the community media sector. CBS or HBO are part of the commercial sector.) Most community media centers report having significant funding decreases and cutbacks of in-kind support from local cable operators, which happened mainly as a result of new state franchising laws and decisions by local governments, which are responsible for challenging telcos and cable operators at state levels. Cable operators, too, are affected by changes due to the internet, as more and more cable subscribers "cut the cord" and drop their cable programming altogether.

In the age of YouTube, the question inevitably arises, "Why have community media centers?" And it is in this question that the need for media literacy shines through. There is a need for:

- training, not only in the technical skills of production, but in applying the critical thinking skills so necessary for responsible and thoughtful communication
- a common vocabulary that allows for respectful dialogue, and a framework for approaching that dialogue in credible ways
- understanding how the media operate as a system, and how commercial and non-commercial media are affected by their primary purposes
- discernment of hateful media, and a need to protect freedom of speech
- understanding of journalistic ethics, copyright and rules of law concerning media
- local news and local discussion
- addressing media industry concentration and broadening choices
- opportunities for every-day people to express themselves and to organize themselves toward common purposes. Especially, in this endeavor, community media centers have much to offer, for they are positive places to gather, where the local issues and cares can be identified and addressed individually and collectively.

The ongoing shake-up inspired by the internet will undoubtedly continue to challenge community media centers, yet in this shake-up also are the seeds of a more powerful approach to community media – an approach that goes cross-platform and offers people, including very poor people, the ways and the means to band together. The spirit and the means to survive and thrive continue as community media centers reach out more broadly, and find new ways to offer voice and organize towards community goals at the grassroots level.

Community media centers abroad face different circumstances. In many areas of the world, community radio offers a lone voice that is highly cherished by locals. AMARC (http://www.amarceurope.eu/about-us/), the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters, is the international non-governmental organization for the promotion, support and development of community radio worldwide. International headquarters is located in Montreal, Canada, following the founding Assembly held in 1988. The headquarters of

AMARC-Europe were established in Brussels, Belgium, in 2008.

In this issue, we provide two case examples of community media centers and their commitment to media literacy education: one in Dublin, Ireland and one in Brookline, Massachusetts.

Research Highlights

Case 1: Community Radio in Dublin, Ireland

"When it comes to media literacy, I am a missionary, like St. Patrick bringing Christianity to Ireland," said Jack Byrne, who has earned his own description. Byrne is modest: he has actually carried media literacy beyond Ireland, since he is not only the founder and first Chair of NEAR Media Cooperative (http://near.ie/about-us) in Dublin North East, but also the founder and Secretary of Craol (http://www.craol.ie), the Irish Community Radio Network, and the founder and former President of Amarc Europe (http://www.amarceurope.eu/about-us/).

As a retired sales and marketing manager, Jack brings relevant skills to his work. He has contributed to the development of diverse landscapes such as credit unions, the Gaelic games, and residents' organizations. He is the author of several books on media activism and cultural development. But most importantly, he has applied his knowledge towards introducing, scaling and institutionalizing media literacy in community media centers throughout Ireland, and beyond.

"I'm pleased and gratified at the progress we've made in Ireland during the past 20 years," Byrne said. "We have the basics in place to grow, and to proceed with further development. It's a long process. First, you have to believe in the importance of media literacy, since enthusiasm for the subject is the main resource to work with. Then, you need to persuade people and to articulate and document what media literacy is, how it fits and how it benefits. Then, people need to be trained, and they need to be prepared to carry the message. Also, you need to have the structure in place to support the work and carry it on.

"It's easy to be committed to furthering media literacy education. I'm still amazed at how continuously the light bulb goes off with people in our trainings, and when they start understanding media literacy, they say 'Where has this been all my life?' That keeps people coming back and contributing to the community.

"We see media literacy as an essential component of community radio and media. Without media literacy, our cooperative at NEAR fm would be populated by 'busy technicians.' We want our community to know *why* they are using the technology; we want our community to be empowered and to be able to articulate *why* they are involved, not just rely on instinct. To do this, they need the vocabulary for media literacy; they need to be able to define it and to describe it and to be able to develop their communication skills, and understand how media works so that their efforts are beneficial for them and others. Often, our members are itching to get to the equipment, but we incorporate media literacy into our training since we see it as an important step for their own development. Media literacy is not an add-on; it is a serious component of the training and an important step towards 'up-skilling.'

"There are many disadvantaged people in Dublin North East, and the word 'literacy' can be off-

putting. We show people how to 'read the media' through images and videos; even with limited education, people embrace the ideas and this enhances their ability to produce videos reflecting their own lives and the community here."

NEAR fm, which was licensed in 1995 after an intense lobbying effort beginning in the 1980s, has incorporated media literacy into its trainings since its beginnings. "I discovered media literacy in 1995," Byrne said, "and we looked to the U.S. since the U.S. was ahead of us in articulating what media literacy is." NEAR fm's mission statement supports media literacy, saying that NEAR fm will "Recognize the power of sound, image and the spoken word to engage the mind and nurture the human spirit," and Support community building and values, interculturalism and linguistic diversity."

"Our training addresses the basics," Byrne said, "like how to use a microphone, but we feel that media literacy is not just a parallel topic for training that goes along with the tech training, but it is at the heart of what we do – it provides a different rationale for what we do and for why community media exists.

"Beginning in 2000, we began to scale our efforts throughout Ireland. We had a cohort at NEAR fm who understood what media literacy offers, and we formed a network of community radio and tv stations, Craol, with 30 radio stations and three tv channels. Craol organized a TV Festival annually, mostly addressing technical issues, but when we brought media literacy to the Festival, it blew them away, and is now featured every year.

"We then started working internationally through Amarc, and brought media literacy to their workshops and trainings. We found receptive ears and we are called on regularly to do speeches and trainings. People realize that we live in a media-saturated world, and that since media *are* our culture, it's vitally important for our citizens to understand how media work. We've continued to deepen our training resources, and we just introduced a Level 5 training, which builds on our basic courses. At NEAR fm, ten of our 12 Committee of Management members are committed to doing this Level 5 media literacy training."

In the meanwhile, lobbying efforts by Byrne in Ireland led to a call for media literacy in the 2009 Broadcasting Act. In the Act, media literacy is defined as meaning to bring about a better public understanding of:
1. The nature and characteristics of material published by means of broadcast and related electronic media,
2. The processes by which such materials is selected, or made available, for publication by broadcast and related electronic media,
3. The processes by which individuals and communities can create and publish audio or audio-visual material by means of broadcast and related electronic media, and
4. The available systems by which access to material published by means of broadcast and related electronic media is or can be regulated.

"At first," Byrne said, "the wording of the proposed Act did not include media creation, but now, the final wording is a definition of media literacy which includes the involvement of communities/individuals in the production of media as well as an awareness of how media work and influences society. We had to fight for it, but thankfully, the minister was receptive and we were successful in including media creation."

With legislation in place, and trainings being continuously designed and delivered, Byrne is looking ahead to other possibilities for media literacy education: "We can't be complacent in community media about media literacy education, because it's a continuous process of helping people understand why it's important. Media literacy should be spread through the other two media sectors – the public service and the commercial. We are also offering media literacy training in public schools, and working with youth is a priority. Kids can be creative and have freedom with community media; it is important to kick-start their involvement in their community from an early age."

"Media Literacy: Contributions of Irish Community Radio,"
is a 2010 thesis by Irena Cvetkovic for her MA in Media Studies:
http://www.craol.ie/images/content/media-literacy-contribution-of-101018104521.pdf

A bibliography of documents on Irish Community Radio: http://www.craol.ie/122/0/research-&-key-docs-community-radio.html

Case 2: BIG Interactive Media in Brookline, MA

"Freedom of speech and literacy are closely intertwined, because a healthy democracy is dependent on literacy and on freedom of speech," said Kathy Bisbee, executive director of Brookline Interactive Group (BIG) http://brooklineinteractive.org, located in Brookline, MA. "Media literacy is inherent to literacy in today's world, and since community media centers are places where questioning and storytelling come together, media literacy is central to what we do."

BIG is a hive of media activity and community organizing. Just one year ago, BIG's name change reflected a commitment to morph into a next-gen of community media centers. In its recent annual report, Bisbee noted that BIG sees itself "moving away from the traditional models of public access television and evolving into an innovative media center that can be more engaged in created content, news and digital storytelling at BIG, but also that we will incubate media – bright ideas in media, technology, education and exploration in an interactive, engaging and empowering way."

BIG has devoted itself to doing just that. BIG provides $250,000 in media services to community education partners, 3500 hours of education for Brookline public schools, after-school programs, summer camps, early release programs, adult workshops and group classes,

and served 550 youth and hundreds of adults through BIG's media literacy and educational programs.

BIG produces the BeeBear Book Club for preschoolers; Girl Scouts learned to use BIG equipment and produce shows on topics such as cyber bullying, environmental protection, animal rights, healthy living and child abuse. BIG has formed a Holocaust Advisory Committee, while a Documentary film club meets monthly, providing screenings of films voted on by members of the group. MediaGirls, a nonprofit that offers after-school programs for middle school girls, teamed with BIG to pilot classes and offer programming to schools. The Grandstanders is an engaging sports show by Boston fans for Boston fans, and BIG partnered with the Brookline MLK Day to produce a short documentary for the MLK Day celebration program called "Post Racial America?"

Whether producing hyper-local community programs or working with local agencies to support their programming, BIG is a steady presence in the Brookline community. "Media literacy is a skill-set that helps people connect the dots, to have associative fluency in dealing with all kinds of issues through media. We help people develop a design-thinking approach, where asking the right questions and getting to the heart of a need or problem is the place to begin," Bisbee said.

BIG encourages these skills from an early age through its work within K-8 classrooms and at three high schools, where BIG staff shares computer labs with teachers within the high schools. The media equipment used varies with the task, with studio equipment, ipads or still cameras amongst the possibilities for lessons. "We want children to develop critical thinking and problem solving skills, and media provide a great starting place for developing these skills," said Jess Axelrad, BIG's K-8 Education Coordinator. "We want students to understand how to be a media consumer through making media; this project-based approach is very effective and even very young children want to explore and to understand media."

BIG incorporates technology standards as well as Common Core standards into lessons, as benchmarks for assessment. "We want to support teachers in achieving their existing goals and objectives, not give them more and more to do," Axelrad said.

"Our work at BIG isn't about BIG's story, it's about our community's story," said Bisbee. "Community-based story-telling is a political act; our role at the center is to see that all voices are represented and in that sense, we are a last bastion of free speech." For BIG, the results are in the telling, and in the doing of the telling.

CML News
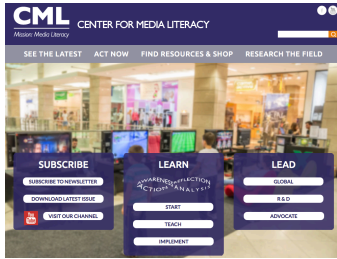
Introducing CML's Global OnRamp Resources

Access the information and activities you need to get started with media literacy. Free downloads explaining the fundamentals of media literacy and the Five Key Questions and Core Concepts are now available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Turkish and Arabic through the CML Store. Get started today!
http://store.media-values.com/freeonrampproducts.aspx
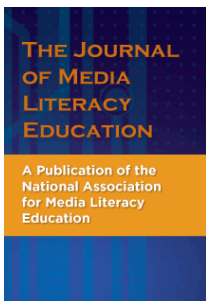
Just Published in Journal of Media Literacy Education

How must curricula change with the new demands for global education and for learning *anytime*, *anywhere*? CML's Tessa Jolls explores these questions in the Journal of Media Literacy Education, in her article "The New Curricula, Propelling the Growth of Media Literacy Education."
http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/jmle/vol7/iss1/7/

About Us...

The Consortium for Media Literacy addresses the role of global media through the advocacy, research and design of media literacy education for youth, educators and parents.

The Consortium focuses on K-12 grade youth and their parents and communities. The research efforts include nutrition and health education, body image/sexuality, safety and responsibility in media by consumers and creators of products. The Consortium is building a body of research, interventions and communications that demonstrate scientifically that media literacy is an effective intervention strategy in addressing critical issues for youth. **http://consortiumformedialiteracy.org**

Resources for Media Literacy

Resources for Media Literacy Educators

Join CML on Facebook for regular updates on media literacy reports and research. We'll keep you posted on important happenings in the field. https://www.facebook.com/pages/Center-for-Media-Literacy/368110316726794

CML
Mission: Media Literacy

For quick classroom activities, access the library of **MediaLit Moments** on the Consortium for Media Literacy web site http://consortiumformedialiteracy.org. A new MediaLit Moments activity is published with every issue of this newsletter and addresses one of the Five Key Questions and Core Concepts for media literacy.

We highly recommend that educators download *Literacy for the 21st Century* from the Global OnRamp Resources section on the CML Store. This free resource introduces the fundamentals of media literacy and offers a strong foundation for getting started. The publication is available free of charge in a variety of languages. Go to http://store.media-values.com/freeonrampproducts.aspx.

Med!aLit Moments

Are You Living in a Media Desert?

In many communities, local news from a credible source is no longer available; more than 120 communities have lost their local newspaper since 2008, according to the Media Deserts Project, which calls communities that have no local news coverage "media deserts."

In this MediaLit Moment, students will have an opportunity to discover their local news sources, and to see whether their community is in a "media desert." They will then have an opportunity to put their own experience into context by checking out a national map of media deserts at the Media Deserts Project website at http://www.mediadeserts.com

Have your students examine their local media sources

AHA!: Some communities don't have access to local news!

Grade Level: 5-8

Key Question #3: How might different people understand this message differently?
Core Concept #3: Different people experience the same media message differently.
Key Question #4: What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
Core Concept #4: Media messages have imbedded values and points of view.

Materials: Computer with high-speed internet connection, LCD projector and screen. Various visuals and explanations are available at: http://www.mediadeserts.com

Activity: Review the map depicted and see where your local community fits. Before sharing any of these visuals with your students, begin by asking a provocative question or two, that will help students think about knowledge that they may already have about the subject, for example:

- Does your community enjoy fresh, local news and information on an ongoing basis?
- What are the local news sources that your family uses? How often are these sources available? Do you read or watch or use this media?
- Have you seen news or information about your friends or relatives in local news? Have you or your family ever been featured in local news? Like sports listings or announcements or for sad events like obituaries? How did you feel about this? Do you think this type of local news is important?

Then, show the map of the Media Deserts. Ask students to point out where their community might fall on the map, and why. What might some differences be for the communities in a Media Desert, or not? Discuss the consequences of being in a Media Desert – or not.

Ask students:

- Does your community have a community media center, or a library that encourages media production by locals? Possibly a Maker Space? Share information on these resources.

Extended Activity: If possible, visit your local community media center, library or Maker Space with students; if possible, arrange for students to do a production activity that has a media literacy focus.