The Uses of Literacy *Today*

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1. European Commission field review on media literacy in secondary education

2. US Embassy project – Media Literacy vs Fake News

3. Samsung project – from Digital Literacy to Capability

4. Third Space (Digital) Literacies

5. The Uses of Media Literacy – Richard Hoggart today
In *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), Richard Hoggart wrote about how people were using the new ‘mass literacy’ for self-improvement, education, social mobility and civic engagement but that outside forces were seizing the opportunity to use this same expansion in literacy, through the new mass media, for commercial and political exploitation.

In the era of ‘information disorder’ and ‘fake news’, is the same thing happening? **What kinds of literacy are required to survive in the new information and data landscape?**

Going further, and crucially, as literacy competencies are never neutral and are, let’s face it, used often for bad things, how do we turn our attention instead, now, to the ‘uses’ of these literacies, as Hoggart did over sixty years ago. **How do we focus on these uses of literacy as capabilities rather than competencies?**

How can we develop a capability framework for the uses of literacy today?
Optimism - collective engagement in a project of civic literacy would grow naturally out of the increasing education of the working classes, so knowledge really would translate into power.

Concern – “There are many movements towards increasing and improving the minority; there are may larger and on the whole more successful movements towards strengthening the hold of a few… on the great majority of people”. (p277)
Autonomous technologies, run-away markets, and weaponized media seem to have overturned civil society, paralyzing our ability to think constructively, connect meaningfully, or act purposefully. It feels as if civilization itself were on the brink, and that we lack the collective willpower and coordination necessary to address issues of vital importance to the very survival of our species. It doesn’t have to be this way. (Rushkoff, 2018: 3)

As many as possible of the citizens of a democracy must be not only literate but critically literate if they are to behave as full citizens. (Hoggart, 1957)

Hoggart ends his conclusion with the question of how freedom can remain meaningful as technology develops and makes us feel ever freer, when we may be less free.

There is much to disagree with in The Uses of Literacy and much to dispense with now, theoretically and politically, for the work of media literacy. But this is still the question. (Bennett, McDougall and Potter, 2020)
(Digital) Literacy: The what and the how
A (new) ‘Perfect Storm’

Technology + Networks + Austerity + Polarisation + Data + Surveillance + Digital Capitalism
“DEMOCRATS ARE NOT BORN BUT MADE”

democracy requires ongoing attention, also from education

particularly in a time when democracy is under pressure

rise of populism – from the ‘left,’ ‘right’ and ‘centre’
‘difficult conversations’ in classrooms
the explicit rejection of democratic values (‘multiculturalism’)
“populism, xenophobia, divisive nationalism, discrimination,
the spreading of fake news and misinformation, as well as the challenge of radicalisation.”

What kind of attention is needed?
What might education contribute
...develop a coherent understanding of the media environment, improve cross-disciplinary collaboration, leverage the current media crisis to consolidate stakeholders and develop curricula for addressing action in addition to interpretation.

What about looking at the vitality of the patient instead? So rather than coming up with a new algorithm to filter dangerous, weaponized memes from my teen’s Instagram account, what about if I just make my teen, and our culture, more resilient to this? So I’m trying to promote our humanity so we’re less vulnerable to the insanity rather than looking at the insanity as the problem to be fixed.
Democratization of everything.... and its consequences

- loss of gatekeepers
- distrust of traditional news corresponding with rise of ‘influencers’
- equating expertise with elitism

“These smug pilots have lost touch with regular passengers like us. Who thinks I should fly the plane?”
Transmedia Learning: Beyond media specificity

Active Inquiry / Game-based / Collaborative learning effectively nurtures critical, analytical and reflective ML skills.

Holistic and Reflective Media Learning – The Third Space

‘DIY learning’ across physical and virtual borders - a shift in mindset that mingled the roles and identities of teachers and students.
1. **bring together** leading researchers in the field of media literacy with key stakeholders (journalism, education, libraries, digital media) *and* young citizens.

2. **provide** a forum for key stakeholders to listen to, and exchange knowledge with young people, to develop resilience in young citizens through media literacy and reduce the potential impact of ‘fake news’ and disinformation;

3. **produce** an open access digital toolkit for media resilience, focusing on ‘fake news’ and disinformation.
Impact

The Centre for Excellence in Media Practice

Media studies should be mandatory, says Bournemouth University

In order to tackle fake news, a research report from the university finds that critical media studies should be taught in all schools.

Impact

Tackle fake news by teaching media studies, says report

Making media studies mandatory in schools would help children to learn about disinformation on the internet, study says

By Helen Ward

Media studies should be made mandatory in schools to prevent young people being taken in by fake news and disinformation, a research project has recommended.

The project, led by the Centre for Excellence in Media Practice at Bournemouth University, found that the current curriculum is not teaching students enough about media literacy.

"The current curriculum is not teaching students enough about media literacy," said Dr. Julian McDonald, Head of the Centre for Excellence in Media Practice. "This is why we have developed a new curriculum that teaches media literacy to young people."}

GUEST POST: 'LITERACY VERSUS FAKE NEWS: CRITICAL THINKING, RESILIENCE AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT' PROJECT

Dr. Julian McDonald is the Head of the Centre for Media Practice (CEMP) at the University of Bournemouth. He runs a doctoral programme for teachers, while a postgraduate - Media Practice and Education, and convenes an international conference each year called the Media Education Summit. In this post he talks about fake news and disinformation, discussing a CEMP project addressing this and highlighting the project contribution that was developed to deal with it.

"As many as possible of the citizens of a democracy must be not only literate but critically literate if they are to behave as full citizens," (Hargreaves, 2009: 189)

It is a research centre at Bournemouth University (CEMP) and teach and write about media education and media literacy. It also runs a doctoral programme for teachers, while a postgraduate - Media Practice and Education, and convenes an international conference each year called the Media Education Summit. More so, all this is an
Despite the potential for participatory democracy, our digital existence is enmeshed in global capitalism. My anxiety is that if this is seen as an educational project coming down solely to the need for better ‘media literacy’ then that loses sight of a broader political citizenship that seeks to understand how our worlds have been created in particular political and economic configurations and then how our media fit into that.

So I want young people to be able to critique and analyse media but as part of a critique of advanced global capitalism. To focus on a kind of techno-fix to fake news as though just teaching the kids that if they can identity fake news, all will be fine, is a useful distraction; but it may well result in letting legacy media, which has got us to this problem in the first place, off the hook, as they claim that they, and only they, can show us what the truth is.

**DISCUSS** – are we teaching this? Should we be?
The issue with young people is they know it’s fake, but they do it anyway. For old people, I’m worried about media literacy, for young people I’m worried about media morality. A 13 year old understands that it’s wrong to steal someone’s photos and put them on an instagram page and pretend to be that person. With young people it’s not about whether they fall for fake news, it’s about them knowing it’s fake and weaponising it. That’s pretty similar to how every young person figures out ways to hurt other young people on the internet. But the really society-collapsing garbage that happens right now, that’s on the other side of it, because young people can’t vote, I’m more worried about the effect of conspiracy theories that people who can vote shouldn’t even be aware of. The influence of that on how young people understand right and wrong is the bigger problem, we’re stuck in a bad cycle right now.

DISCUSS: AGREE?
There are some significant pedagogical problems in how we might deal with fake news. There’s a danger here of assuming that we are dealing with a rational process – or at least one that can, by some pedagogical means, be made rational. But from an educational perspective, we surely have to begin with the question of why people might believe apparently ‘fake’ news in the first place. By no means all media use is rational. Where we decide to place our trust is as much to do with fantasy, emotion and desire, as with rational calculation.

**DISCUSS:** from your experience?
Fake Climate News: Critically Engaging Climate Disinformation in the News (Eco)system with Ecomedia Literacy

Spreadable Spectacle in Digital Culture: Civic Expression, Fake News, and the Role of Media Literacies in “Post-Fact” Society

Misinformation in the Information Age: What Teachers Can Do to Support Students
The ‘top ten’ multi-stakeholder media literacy resources for resilience to information disorder
1. ‘Giving a fish’ – using the toolkit within current teaching to give a fish;

2. Opportunities to integrate in more depth for teaching to fish.

This research project, led by the Centre for Excellence in Media Practice and funded by the US Embassy in London, brought together leading media literacy researchers from the US and UK to work with teachers, librarians, journalists and young people to share knowledge for tackling ‘fake news’ and disinformation with critical media literacy.
“...the alternative combinations of things a person is able to do or be – the various ‘functionings’ she can achieve...the approach is based on a view of living as a combination of various ‘doings’ and ‘beings.’”

Amartya Sen, 1984
Participants all demonstrated (digital) functionings in one or more of these practices:

. independent engagement with learning in new (digital) contexts (sometimes epistemological, sometimes curational, creative, or self-representational);

. self-selection of suitable applications for ‘schooled’ learning;

. autonomy in taking the lead in collaborative learning with parents and carers (evidence of ‘flipped learning’ in a family/home context).

Very rarely, however, could students demonstrate meaningful uses of such digital literacy for positive change.

This kind of (digital) capability, the full combination of these functionings, was absent on this evidence, as the uses of digital literacy were always partial.
First space – home

Second space – school / education

Third space – in between

’In between’
• Physical or metaphorical or digital / virtual
• Expertise is exchanged between teacher and student
• Learners bring with them repertoires of literacy and funds of knowledge
**Dynamic Literacies** offer a sharp contrast with the static nature of the literacy of performative systems, being inclusive of various other liminal, spatial and technological literacies and concerned with the sociomateriality of digital media.

**Third Spaces**

When digital media is used to create a **third space** with the effect of transgressing disciplines and traditional ideas about knowledge and expertise…

**Curation** is a new form of cultural production and literacy practice. We should recognise the skills, knowledge and dispositions which go with it as a practice and build on them in education.

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**In our work with young people, is our framework for literacy: static, agentive or **dynamic**?**

**Can we facilitate third spaces to work in with young people?**

**Can we integrate curation into the repertoire of literacy skills we acknowledge in our work with young people?**

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**Our research says….** the challenge is to adapt educational practices to free agentive, social and connected learners from static systems. A static curriculum puts some young people at risk from propaganda, hate speech, disinformation, fake news, cyber-bullying..

**Agentive people are less vulnerable.**
Hoggart’s importance lies not so much in the examples he chose, and certainly not in his judgement of individual items, but in his attempt to connect the inner life of the individual with the growth of mediated meanings in democratising and commercial societies. (Hartley, 2012: 1-2)

Original title was ‘The Abuses of Literacy’

1950s Yorkshire, England: we are moving towards the creation of a mass culture, the remnants of an urban culture ‘of the people’ are being destroyed, and the new mass culture is in some important ways less healthy than the often crude culture it is replacing.

Brexit Britain, 2019 – the transition from mass culture to media literacy – just as complicated and double-edged – the uses of media literacy, the uses of media literacy on us, the abuses of media literacy.

‘The Uses of Literacy’ is a book that could be seen to be an ‘as if’ book, it is a re-imagination of the personal into forward thinking about how could culture could be. It is both a utopian enterprise, and a dystopian vision

Kate Pahl, afterword to The Uses of Media Literacy (Bennett, McDougall and Potter, 2020)