CONNECT!ONS Med!aLit moments

In This Issue…

Theme: Media Literacy Policy and Legislation

It's no wonder that media literacy educators and advocates feel that they labor in obscurity. Who's heard of media literacy? Who understands what it is? Where does it ever get mentioned in official policy? While the general lack of awareness of media literacy in the U.S. presents a significant challenge, it also presents an opportunity.

Public interest in Edward Snowden's revelations of domestic surveillance by the NSA has continued unabated since they were published in May of last year--so much so that President Obama has felt compelled to issue statements and directives to increase transparency and accountability in government intelligence gathering. What if Obama launched a media literacy initiative to increase awareness of the entire range of privacy issues that citizens face in an electronic age?

Last year the Supreme Court struck down a provision of the 1965 Voting Rights Act that had required increased monitoring of Southern states for potential voting rights violations. Since then, the federal government and civil rights activists have been struggling to find an alternative to expensive litigation in individual cases. What about adult education and other programs that help citizens understand the construction of political marketing and advertising in their state? When voters are engaged, they're likely to demand access to the franchise as well.

So far these proposals might sound like items on a wish list, but consider the case of video games. Ever since the graphic violence of *Mortal Kombat* captured the attention of parents and legislators in 1993, attempts have been made to regulate or ban violent video games, with little success. The body of First Amendment jurisprudence forces governments to prove what they cannot: that violent video game content poses a threat of imminent harm. In essence, federal legislators and state governments are indulging in wishful thinking at taxpayer expense. They could avoid First Amendment challenges altogether by mandating and funding media literacy programs that help students respond critically and thoughtfully to violent media.

In addition, it's entirely possible that media literacy will find a foothold in existing education policy. As Frank Gallagher of Cable in the Classroom observes, digital literacy programs are increasing in number and sophistication: "Digital citizenship has many champions and is becoming part of instruction--sometimes as a more positive approach to mandated Internet safety instruction, sometimes as part of character development programs, sometimes in technology education, and sometimes woven throughout the curriculum. Whatever the entry point, it is beginning to take hold and provide a platform for media literacy ("Media Literacy Education: A Requirement for Today's Digital Citizens," 178).

In this issue of *Connections*, we examine policy issues involving media literacy from a number of perspectives. In our first research article, we review the 2011 Supreme Court case which

struck down California's 2005 law banning the sale of violent video games to minors, and explain why media literacy education could easily have fulfilled the intentions of the law. In our second research article, we report and comment on current developments in media literacy policy in the European Union, tracking the progress that has been made, as well as issues that still need to be resolved. In our resources section, we offer an interview with Erin McNeill of Media Literacy Now, who explains what media literacy advocates need to do if they wish to see media literacy incorporated into the education policies of their home states. We offer a substantial listing of resources for research and discussion, including policy guidelines for UNESCO media and information literacy (MIL) initiatives, some of which deal with issues that might be unfamiliar to "first world" media literacy educators. And in our MediaLit Moment, your early elementary students will have some fun as they deconstruct messages about gender that are embedded in advertisements for girls' toys.

Game Over for Violent Video Game Legislation?

The 2011 case of *Brown v. Entertainment Merchants Association* is indeed a disappointment for parents and legislators nationwide. In this case, the Supreme Court held for the first time that video games constituted protected First Amendment speech, no matter how violent, and that such games could forever be sold without limitation to children (Schlafly, "Game Over for Childhood," p.173). But the blame for this outcome, if any, should not be attributed solely to the Justices who decided the case. The outcome has just as much to do with the inadequacy of existing laws to address violent content, and with the ill-advised choices that California legislators made in drafting and defending the statute that was overturned.

To be sure, Justice Antonin Scalia, who led the 5-4 majority in the decision, displayed a characteristic impatience with the task of deciding what is too violent or too offensive to be protected by the First Amendment. During the oral argument in the case, Scalia asserted ". . .I'm concerned with the First Amendment. . .And it was always understood that the freedom of speech did not include obscenity. It has never been understood that the freedom of speech did not include portrayals of violence" (quoted in Schlafly, 182). Using this line of argument, Justice Scalia managed to convince three of his more liberal colleagues that questions of social value, including the value of avoiding harm to minors, was irrelevant to the case before them.

While Scalia asserted that there is a "tradition" of cases on obscenity to guide their decisions, it is also true that the current legal test of obscenity created by the Court in *Miller v. California* (1973) is relatively recent. If the definition of obscenity has been revisited numerous times, why should violent content not also be considered? An important opportunity has been missed.

The other major challenge for California Assembly Bill 1179 (enacted in 2005) lay in the fact that the kind of harm to minors contemplated in the law was largely incongruent with the definition of harmful, unprotected speech developed in First Amendment cases. As legal challenges mounted, the state defended the law with expert testimony from psychologists on the aggressive thoughts and behaviors which violent video games could provoke. The bar set by the Supreme Court decision in *Brandenburg v. Ohio* (1969) was much higher, however. It held that unprotected speech will have a "tendency to produce *imminent* lawless action" (Aquilina, "Judgment Day for *Schwarzenegger v. EMA*," 604, emphasis added). This was an insurmountable hurdle for the California law, and in 2009 the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals struck it down for this reason.

The California law also represented a failure of policy because its definition of violence essentially bypassed the ratings given to video games by the Entertainment Software Ratings Board, which include some highly specific content descriptors for violence. In 2009, the FTC

found that the ESRB system had been effective in addressing three key areas of concern: 1) restricting target-marketing of mature-rated products to children; 2) clearly and prominently disclosing rating information, and 3) restricting children's access to mature-rated products at retail (Aquilina, note 142, p. 615-616). Why would state legislators generate a new definition for media violence rather than seek out ways of reinforcing a ratings system that the FTC itself believed to be successful? For example, if the law's enforcement provision of a $1,000 fine for violent videos sold to minors had been attached to video games bearing an M (mature) rating, it's possible (if not likely) that the law would never have been challenged at all. The artistic expression in video games would not have been at issue, but instead the actions of customers and retailers. Moreover, a focus on ratings would aid parents as they make decisions about the media diet of their children.

In addition, the authors of the bill had entirely focused on protection of children, and apparently had not considered the possibility that children themselves could learn how to critically examine the influence of media in their own lives. Recently, CML made the heartening discovery that *CQ Researcher*, a periodical targeted to secondary and college students, had published a policy issues brief on media violence which concluded with a short feature on Brad Koepenick's media literacy classes at CHAMPS charter school of the arts in Van Nuys, California. Koepenick's classes include clips from controversial sources such as *South Park* and *Grand Theft Auto*, but his students are also tasked with analyzing whether scenes of violence or conflict are realistic, appropriate or excessive. And Koepenick and his students tackle many difficult questions about violent media through the core concepts of media literacy.

Finally, the bill's authors didn't consider the possibility that media literacy education could fulfill the intentions that had prompted them to draft the legislation in the first place. If they had, they would have been able to weigh the benefits and risks of the choices before them. What is likely to result in the least cost to taxpayers? Defending the law in the court system with research that cannot possibly prove an imminent threat of harm? Or convincing teachers, school districts and legislators that research-based media literacy programs, taught by trained teachers, can help students thoughtfully reflect on their consumption of violent media?

Current Developments in European Union Media Literacy Policy

Because media literacy experts have been discussing the need for media literacy for some time before various EU legislative and policy bodies, some educators and policy makers on this side of the Atlantic may have the impression that implementation of EU media literacy policy initiatives has been coherent and well-managed. While progress has been made, this characterization would not reflect the reality of current efforts.

Media literacy working groups have largely agreed on a definition of media literacy borrowed from the 1992 U.S. National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy: to "access, analyze

evaluate and produce both print and electronic media"; but to date none of the EU member states have arrived at a common definition. Moreover, the kind of media literacy skills that should be promoted have been a matter of substantial debate. Sonia Livingstone and Yin-Han Wang, who prepared a 2013 report on the UK Communications Act of 2003 for the London School of Economics, argued that Ofcom--the only communications regulator in the EU with a specific mandate to promote media literacy--has been overly reductive in its approach, limiting its activities to fostering access to technology, functional skills, basic awareness-raising and providing safety tools: "Media literacy, it appeared, was valued for its potential in avoiding consumer detriment," with no recognition of media literacy as a vehicle for empowerment or democratic engagement. In addition, "Ofcom's evidence-based approach, generally a positive feature of its work, resulted in a highly pragmatic set of proxy measures being used to operationalize media literacy according to standards of rigour and representativeness supposedly required by the government and media industry. Little attention was paid to the claim advanced by civil society and the academy that media literacy is and should be far more than the sum of these simple measures" (Livingstone and Wang, "On the Difficulties of Promoting Media Literacy," 163).

Quite often, the EU is faced with the larger question of whether to approach media literacy more broadly or narrowly. Take, for example, a 2013 Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) initiative which included a media literacy working group. The introduction to the report on the most recent group meeting touted the fact that participants represented all the various sectors informing media literacy policy (among them education, industry, civil society). And yet the summary of conclusions states that participants "disagreed about whether to think more pragmatically and seek smaller, manageable wins, or to think more broadly and consider the larger impact of media literacy across sectors" (Bulger, "Media literacy research and policy in Europe," 27).

In 2007 the European Parliament adopted the Audiovisual Media Services Directive, which, among other provisions, required media literacy levels for all member states to be reported by December 2011. In 2009, Paolo Celot, director of the European Association for Viewers' Interests, led a series of studies of all 27 EU states. The concept of media literacy developed for the study appeared to combine approaches. The consortium of researchers identified two dimensions of media literacy: one flowing from an individual's ability to utilize the media; the other informed by contextual and environmental factors. The theoretical framework for media literacy included:

Individual Competences: a) individual technical skills   b) critical understanding,
                                           and c) communicative skills
Environmental Factors: a) media education   b) media policy   c) media availability, and
                                   d) roles of the media industry and civil society

(Source: Celot, "EAVI Studies on Media Literacy in Europe," 78-79).

In 2010, Monica Bulger, a research associate at the Oxford Internet Institute, led a project team which formulated and tested assessments to be used for the final EU study. In an article on the group's work, she was quick to point out that political interests could affect (if not distort) the overall assessment. Noting that interviews with media literacy experts in the member states formed part of the "media literacy context" measures in the initial report by Celot and his colleagues, Bulger argues, "This process highlights the challenges of moving from concept to measurement. . .It reflected a consensus model, with many components of media literacy accounted for but potentially de-prioritising core components as identified by empirical research in favour of addressing expectations of various stakeholder groups--e.g., broadcast media, commerce, advocacy" ("Measuring Media Literacy in a National Context," 91).

Among other things, Bulger and her team developed surveys for the EU assessment. Despite the fact that Ofcom came under criticism in the Livingstone and Wang report, Bulger and her team found that surveys developed by Ofcom provided some of the most useful methods for measuring critical approaches to media, as well as surveys from ActiveWatch Romania, the Oxford Internet Survey, and EU Kids Online. As the team continued to develop the surveys, they reduced the number of questions about media use, and focused more strongly on questions of critical understanding and engagement, since this was an area with limited pre-existing data.

While the final assessment created by Celot, Bulger and their colleagues has made valuable contributions to the field, the outcome of their efforts has been disappointing. To date, no EU member state has utilized the assessment tool. And, at the September 2013 meeting of the COST media literacy working group, many participants agreed that the reporting requirement for member states had not been communicated well at the national level, and several stated that their countries were either not aware of the requirement, or had not received sufficient direction to move forward ("Media literacy research and policy in Europe," 4).

At times, the task seems entirely daunting for EU media literacy educators and advocates. Livingstone and Wang note that policy statements from the EU have been strongly focused on adults, recognizing that media literacy is 'an important factor for active citizenship' (166). Yet Livingstone observes elsewhere that, if media literacy education were to be publicly provided for this population, the costs would be prohibitive ("Media literacy: Ambitions, policies and measures," 32). In a 2012 special issue of *Media Studies* on European media literacy initiatives, Jos de Haan and Nathalie Sonck report that educational opportunities for adults have sprung up in a variety of informal settings since the turn of the 21st century, but that many of these programs have focused on basic skills ("Digital Skills in Perspective," 12-129).

These and other observations have been scattered across European media literacy scholarship--as if they were problems in search of a solution. This is an area in which American scholarship and experience may be helpful. While they do not provide a definitive

model for education, the survey studies undertaken by the Pew Internet Project, the work of Henry Jenkins on participatory media and the many publications on informal learning from the Digital Media and Learning initiative at the MacArthur Foundation all could provide further direction for European efforts in adult media literacy education.

CML News

Do Children Have Too Much Access to Violent Content?

CML's research on media literacy and violence is mentioned in the Media Violence issue of *CQ Researcher* now available from SAGE Publishing.

CML Fellow Brad Koepenick is featured in the issue for his work with eighth-graders in the Los Angeles area and how media literacy education affected their relationship to violent media.

This is an in-depth look at the questions surrounding violent media content.
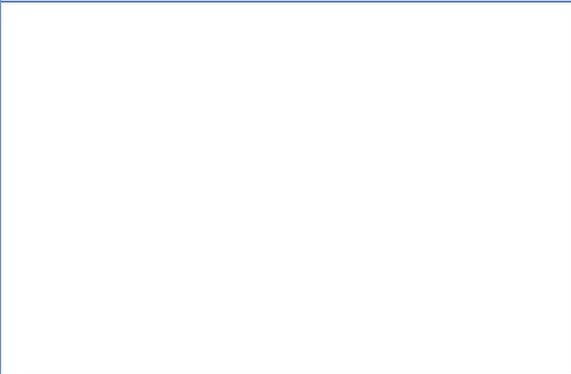
Media Literacy Research Symposium

The Media Literacy Research Symposium held March 21 at Fairfield University brought together media literacy advocates from around the world. Tessa Jolls, CML President, participated on the panel *Media Literacy in Action*. The Symposium was organized by Belinha De Abreu and Paul Mihalidis.
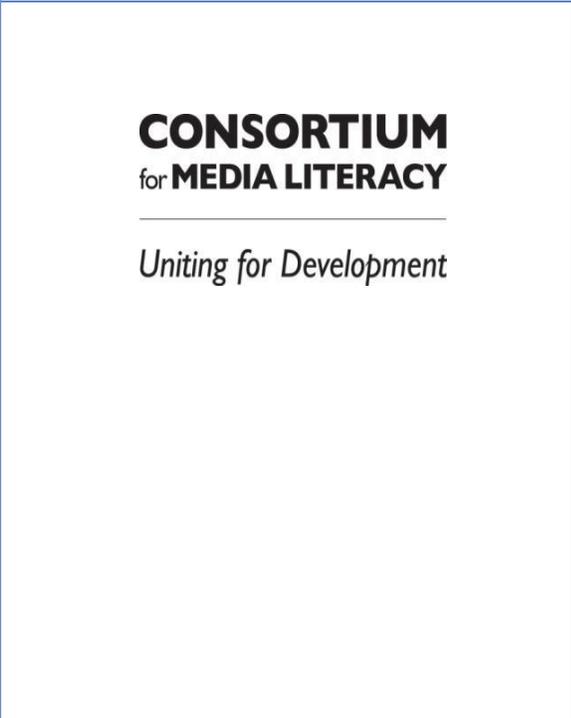
About Us…

The Consortium for Media Literacy addresses the role of global media through the advocacy, research and design of media literacy education for youth, educators and parents. The Consortium focuses on K-12 grade youth and their parents and communities. The research efforts include nutrition and health education, body image/sexuality, safety and responsibility in media by consumers and creators of products. The Consortium is building a body of research, interventions and communication that demonstrate scientifically that media literacy is an effective intervention strategy in addressing critical issues for youth.
www.consortiumformedialiteracy.org

Resources for Media Literacy

Interview with Erin McNeill, Media Literacy Now

Erin McNeill is the founding director of Media Literacy Now, an organization which tracks and supports media literacy policy initiatives throughout the United States.

CML: How did you first become interested in media literacy?

EM: It's something that I did with my kids, like many parents do, but not in any formal or directed way. I didn't know the term media literacy, but I'd watch TV with the kids, and talk about the stereotyping we saw, or talk about ads and how they were trying to get them to buy something, or try to get them laughing about the heavy-handed persuasive techniques. I didn't have all the language, like the CML Five Questions, so I did my best, and missed a lot, too.

It was at the 2010 Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood summit that I first learned the term "media literacy," and that was only four years ago. That conference was pivotal. I went because the commercialization and marketing to children was a huge concern of mine. But I came away with so many new ideas and met so many people doing amazing work. It was mind-blowing. Immediately after that I started writing my blog ["Marketing, Media and Childhood"], and continued to learn a lot about media messages and marketing to children. Media literacy became more and more a theme of that work, and I see it as a coming together of a lot of parts of my life.

CML: Why did you start Media Literacy Now?

EM: As I was writing and getting to know people, I was talking to lot of people across the country. And I saw that, while many educators were working in the field trying to help kids, to make sure that they understood media, and could develop skills in critical analysis, they weren't really getting a lot of help from other sources, like policymakers and parents. Without demand from parents and policy makers, teachers are fighting the system. I know a 5th grade teacher in my town in Massachusetts who was developing her own media lit curriculum in her 5th grade glass. She set out to do that, to build her unit from materials online--from scratch. She had to use her own independent time during the school year. She didn't want to fight her administrators by coming into conflict with the standardized testing near the end of the year. She taught her unit right after that. And it worked really well. The kids were really engaged at a time of year when they're usually not engaged at all. They were very interested. I was there, and watched, and took pictures. The kids had their hands up all the time. From there I talked with staffers at the state house that I knew who were working for Katherine Clark, one of our state senators at the time. I talked to them about how great it would be to have people in the statehouse talking about this. What if we had a hearing on media literacy education? There's just no public policy discussion on media literacy; it's so rare. This would be a chance to open a discussion, have a hearing, a debate. That would be a giant step forward.

We worked together to write a bill, which was in the beginning of 2011, with Katherine Clark, who's in Congress now. She introduced a bill, which went to the Education Committee, and then to a hearing. We had a bunch of people to testify in favor of the bill, eleven or twelve people. They were there talking about why media literacy is so important, telling the chairwoman of the Education Committee why media literacy was so critical and urgent. It was a great day, and also an opportunity. I thought we opened a lot of eyes on the committee. It was so new for so many people. It's not a household word. A lot of people don't know what it is. And when the committee members heard that's it not about censorship or blocking media but helping kids understand messages they're bombarded with, I think it opened a lot of eyes.

I expected after that hearing for it to be so obvious that it was so urgent, and so necessary, that of course the bill would move out of committee, to the floor, that they would all vote for it, and it would become law. That didn't happen. They had to study it. It was too new, and they had other priorities. It was a little bit hard for legislators to understand. But we kept going. We kept building support and finding advocates throughout state. Even when the bill was killed for the session by sending it in for study (sessions last two years), I found people to help advocate for it, and kept moving forward and building support. So we introduced it again. Katherine Clark introduced it in the next session, and brought on a new sponsor in the House, Dave Rogers. By getting our list of advocates and getting busy we managed to get another 21 sponsors. So we were making progress.

After that I realized that we needed to do this in every state, and not wait ten years for a bill in Massachusetts to pass. It's just such a slow process. That's why I created Media Literacy Now--to get people talking about legislative action across the country. We planned to keep track of legislation, policy actions, and initiatives in the states--just to make sure that people were aware, and so that activists could keep in touch with each other.

CML: Did you have any involvement with the initiative that just passed in New Hampshire?

EM: That was driven by Media Power Youth. Rona Zlokower was instrumental in getting that legislation passed in New Hampshire. It wasn't legislation per se, but a matter of getting the media literacy program into the budget. Rona approached the Attorney General and helped him understand the importance of media literacy, and how it could address his concerns about violence among youth in NH. We were pleased! It was Rona's advocacy that led to that happening.

CML: What is Media Power Youth's role in the initiative?

EM: Media Power Youth is leading the training. Their advocacy helped us generate awareness, and to spread the news--we could point to media literacy education as a potential model for other states. It was a way to show other policy makers that policy makers in New Hampshire recognized the importance of media literacy education--in this case violence prevention--and we could tell policy makers in Massachusetts or Connecticut, this is an

important part of anti-violence work in your state. It started in NH. It was a great way to disseminate information and help build awareness, which is part of our mission. We aim to raise the level of public policy discourse on media literacy in other states.

We inspired a group in New York state to get legislation introduced. Media Literacy Now has continued to help, advise, and provide resources to them. We've got a new chapter of Media Literacy Now in New Jersey which is exploring options. I'm talking to some other people in other states, individuals and groups in several others, including one out in the Western part of the country.

CML: What happens as a result of your gathering intelligence on the ground?

EM: By keeping in touch with people I know that are active across the country, it's one way to get information. I've personally built a pretty big network of media literacy folks across the country. I've kept in touch with teachers, through my blog and through Twitter. By getting in touch with people when I hear that they're doing something, I'm also building brand awareness of Media Literacy Now so that they will let us know what's happening in their state, so we can help connect activists in that state to that group.

CML: What else do you provide?

EM: Guidance, and resources. We've got a couple of things going on now. One of them is our advocacy tool kit. We put that together so that when there's an individual or group interested in legislative work, they don't have to start from scratch.

CML: What's in the tool kit?

EM: We want to make it as easy as possible for everybody. The tool kit will contain some basic information, such as how to find your legislator.   It also would have templates for letters and e-mails, some materials like flyers, and talking points, and probably a PowerPoint presentation that can be downloaded. With that they can go to their legislator, or to their superintendent, or group, organization or person that they want to recruit as a supporter, and have materials that they can leave behind that offer more information. Why should everybody start from scratch and build everything themselves? And calling a legislator can be an intimidating thing for people who don't normally do such things, especially if they don't know what exactly they want to say.

CML: Could you give us an anatomy of your campaign in Massachusetts? What were the parts? What was the sequence, and how did all the parts fit together?

EM: First we needed to find a legislative sponsor to introduce the bill. Once a bill is introduced, it gets a hearing. Anybody can speak at the hearing, so usually advocates collect speakers. You have them appear at the hearing, and after that you need to do a number of

things. A big part of it is doing some research for the committee. The Education Committee in Massachusetts really wanted to know, where is media literacy happening? In what schools in Massachusetts? They wanted to see samples of what it is, and they wanted to know, who's doing it? They don't want to start their own new program from the state house. They sort of followed the lead of the people. In a way, though they're charged with making the laws, what they do is actually a result of what's actually happening in the world. So we worked on finding out the answers to their questions. Part of it was finding people who would say, I'm really interested, I'm a teacher in this district, what can I do to help? Or they would tell us, this is what is going in this town, or at this high school. That's the research we gathered.

Then you need to prove that there is support. At that stage you need to find credible organizations who will support you, like the teacher's union, which was very interesting for the Education Committee. We also enlisted the support of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, the PTA, and the Worcester District Medical Society. At this point you have to get endorsements and statewide support from important groups. Many of those groups were represented at the hearing, or sent letters. The next step is to get the committee to report the bill favorably, which did not happen in the first session. The success of our bill had a lot to do with how much more support we had been able to build after the hearing, after the bill was sent to study. A lot of people were calling their own legislators and sending testimony to the committee chair.

CML: You can send testimony?

EM: Citizens can turn something in to the legislature to support a bill with a statement of any length. You can provide whatever documentation you want to explain why you want the bill to pass. One of our teachers who supported the bill brought in her students. There's a video of her students on the Media Literacy Now site talking about why media literacy is important to them. There was also a professor who published a book who testified. There were letters of support, and other statements.

Also, you have to learn about how the education system works in your state. In Massachusetts districts have lot of autonomy. There's often a lot of push back when a law requires a particular curriculum. There were people in one hearing asking for a requirement for all students to learn about a particular genocide. They wanted a mandated curriculum, and the Education Committee made it clear that it would not pass any mandated curriculum. For our part we've had a little bit of a job proving that media literacy is not a curriculum, but a method of teaching, a way to teach, a pedagogy. We've made a lot of progress in explaining that you can integrate this into any subject. We're not saying that you have to teach any particular curriculum. There are a number of challenges to this work. In the first place, it's about addressing the lack of awareness of what media literacy is.

We also need to have a list of advocates throughout the state whom we can call on when it's time to take action. We tell them, now it's time to call, to help move the bill out of committee,

or to tell your legislator to vote for this because it's moving to the floor. You need to have a list of e-mails for people who live in the towns you want to focus on. If you want to target a particular legislator, you need to know who your people are. Right now, we'd like to reach out to the State Senate. Terese Murray is our Senate President, so in order to get this legislation to the next step, we'd like to get her interest. If she says yes, that would help move it to the Senate Ways and Means Committee. Another step is to have co-sponsors who will act for this bill so that it is reported to Senate Ways and Means. In this case we've turned to Senator Will Brownsberger, who has written a letter to the Ways and Means Committee to report the bill. Right now we're working with an advocate in Plymouth. We're asking her to make calls to Senator Murray.

CML: The Media Literacy Now website mentions that when the bill was finally reported, it was folded into a civics education bill. Do you have any thoughts about that?

EM: Just about anything can happen in the legislative process! It's hard to know without a lot of experience in what those things are, all the funny things that can happen. We were in the process of talking with the Education Committee about ideas, and then they decided to do this. They reported out a number of bills which they combined, and then re-wrote their own bill. The civic engagement concept has been building and gaining support in Massachusetts, and there are some strong advocates for it. Some wanted a civics course mandated for high school graduation. That was kind of a hard thing to sell in this state because of the autonomy of districts. So the Education Committee does recognize that civics is important. During the hearing we made a pretty good case for media literacy in civics. On our website you can see a picture of students giving their testimony. This teacher Mary Robb brought students from her media literacy and democracy class from Andover, and they explained to the committee why it's important to include media literacy in learning about democracy. That was probably part of what happened here. We made a convincing case that, if they were going to pass a civics bill, they should include a media literacy clause. It was great news. Even though it wasn't our original bill for K-12 and now applies only to high school, it still gets the term media literacy into law, where it wasn't before. If this were to pass, we would have a law that mentions media literacy. It becomes part of the public policy discussion. That's huge, and I hope that we'll be able to ride along with the civics people to get it passed. That's another part of the job now. We'll need to see how we can work together with those advocates.

In general, that's a big part of the job, too. You want to find people who are likely to be on the same side, like public health people, and medical people. You start working together, aligning interests, cooperating, and sharing ideas. And then they start lending their name to your effort. It's all part of the process.

CML: The website mentions that part of your purpose is to share best practices. Could you tell us more about that?

EM: In New York we helped the group there with statements and testimony.

It's also part of the reason for putting together a tool kit. I think one of the things to share is the feedback that we get from legislators and others. I shared our experiences in Massachusetts with the group that was advocating for media literacy legislation in New York. We shared information about the possible feedback and pushback they might receive from legislators so that they could be better prepared --so that they would have answers to legislators' questions and have talking points ready. Sometimes it's a matter of sharing feedback, and using that to find answers to questions that legislators are likely to ask. With others, it's a matter of helping them ask, what kinds of groups do we want to approach for support? Most likely it will be public health and media groups. It could also be superintendents, or unions. It could be a matter of helping them find ways of working with different groups to find out what they are willing to support.   So that helps to write legislation that will gain endorsement of different groups.

CML: Could you tell us a little more about the state chapters for Media Literacy Now?

EM: It's a concept that's been in development. We have one in New Jersey. We had the idea that, if there isn't already a group that Media Literacy Now can work with, we can create one by finding a point person who would be willing to chair the group. That person would be gathering advocates in the state, and going through all the steps we just talked about. And then Media Literacy Now would give help where needed, providing advice on what we found that works.

Sources Cited in this Issue:

Aquilina, Joseph T. "Judgment Day for *Schwarzenegger v. EMA*: Terminating First Amendment Proscriptions on Video Games at the Supreme Court." *CommLaw Conspectus* 19.2 (2011): 597-632.

Bulger, Monica E. "Measuring Media Literacy in a National Context: Challenges of Definition, Method and Implementation." *Media Studies* 3.6 (2012) 83-104.

-------- "Media literacy research and policy in Europe: A review of recent, current and planned activities." London: European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST), December 2013.
Accessed at: http://www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/documents/MPP/COST-Media-literacy-research-and-policy-in-Europe-final.pdf

Celot, Paolo. "EAVI Studies on Media Literacy in Europe." *Media Studies* 3.6 (2012): 76-82.

de Haan, Jos, and Nathalie Sonck. "Digital Skills in Perspective: A Critical Reflection on Research and Policy." *Media Studies* 3.6 (2012): 125-138.

Gallagher, Frank. "Media Literacy Education: A Requirement for Today's Digital Citizens." *Media Literacy Education in Action: Theoretical and Pedagogical Perspectives.* Eds. Belinha De Abreu and Paul Mihailidis. New York: Routledge, 2014. 173-183.

Livingstone, Sonia, and Yin-Han Wang. "On the Difficulties of Promoting Media Literacy."
    In De Abreu and Mihalidis, eds., *Media Literacy Education in Action*. 161-172.

Livingstone, Sonia, ed. "Media literacy: Ambitions, policies and measures." London:
    European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST), September 2011.
    Accessed at: http://www.cost-transforming-audiences.eu/node/223

Lyons, Christina L. "Media Violence." *CQ Researcher* 24.7 (2014): 145-168. Retrieved from
    http://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher .

Schlafly, Andrew L. "Game Over for Childhood?: Violent Video Games as First Amendment
    Speech." *Rutgers Computer & Technology Law Journal* 38.2 (2012): 173-192.

Recommended Resources

UNESCO Media and Information Literacy Policy and Strategy Guidelines
http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002256/225606e.pdf

In addition to publishing a media and information literacy (MIL) curriculum for teacher training, UNESCO has published a comprehensive set of guidelines for policy. A well-conceived policy brief is available for readers who don't want to wade through the entire document. What really makes the guidelines interesting are the unique issues that UN media literacy organizations address. Here are a few relevant passages:

- The foundations of MIL knowledge, attitudes and skills can be developed without access to technology (for example in oral cultures). However, MIL programmes should be responsive to the availability of existing and emerging media and information technologies so that citizens can fully benefit from their use to actively participate in their societies (24).
- MIL policies and strategies are needed that enable people to acquire competencies to advocate and create their own counterbalance to dominant cultures by sharing their stories through discussion and creative engagement, thus protecting cultural diversity, multilingualism and pluralism (13).
- In policy making, it is essential to coordinate all policy areas that have powerful reciprocal relationships with education, including. . .*Protection of the memory of a nation* through its libraries, archives and museums (19, emphasis added).
- MIL programmes will promote the benefits of media and other information providers. . .through making connections between MIL, health literacy, e-health initiatives; with agriculture, science and financial literacy, etc. In particular, they will promote access to information and care for remote and rural communities (26).

Furthermore, the theoretical framework for media and information policies includes several areas of emphasis. In the U.S., individual empowerment is a linchpin of media literacy education. Empowerment is one of several emphases to media literacy highlighted in the UNESCO framework, which also includes:

- A convergence approach which tracks the "flows" between education, ICT, media and MIL policies, as well as policies regarding access to information
- A "knowledge societies" approach, which focuses on equal access to education and information, especially information in the public domain
- A cultural and linguistic diversity approach, including the right to education which addresses the diversity of learners' needs, especially those of minority, indigenous and nomadic groups
- A gender and development based approach, which recognizes that women and men do not have the same access to information, media and new technological platforms-- in terms of use, operation and ownership--and that this should be changed.

Ofcom Media Literacy E-Bulletin
http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/market-data-research/other/media-literacy/information/bulletins/
Published quarterly, the Ofcom media literacy e-bulletin provides comprehensive information on media literacy research, conferences and policy in both Europe and the U.S. (with, of course, a focus on the United Kingdom). Many news items include links to resources.

Finnish Society on Media Education   http://www.mediaeducation.fi/
Scandinavia is home to several media literacy institutes and organizations, including the Nordicom center for media and communications research in Sweden. The Finnish Media Education site includes a blog which reports on international developments in media literacy education, with a focus on Scandinavia, Europe and UN agencies which promote media literacy.

Bickham, David, and Ronald G. Slaby. "Effects of a Media Literacy Program in the U.S. on Children's Critical Evaluation of Unhealthy Media Message about Violence, Smoking and Food." *Journal of Children and Media* 6.2 (2012): 255-271.
Our interview with Erin McNeill in this issue mentions the success which Media Power Youth has enjoyed in making media literacy a central focus of New Hampshire's current youth violence initiatives. This article evaluates the effectiveness of their programs, with largely positive results.

Also Recommended:

Bulger, Monica. "Concerted Action: New Media Literacy Report Outlines Research & Policy Agenda" (London School of Economics media policy blog post).
http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/mediapolicyproject/2013/12/16/concerted-action-new-media-literacy-report-outlines-research-policy-agenda/
Good summary of recent European policy developments

Gallaway, Beth, and J.P. Porcaro. "First Amendment Rights: Should the Government Regulate the Sale of Video Games to Minors?" *School Library Journal* 57.1 (2011): 22
Short article highlights the perspective of library professionals on the issue.

Robinson, Nicholas. "Video Games and Violence: Legislating on the 'Politics of Confusion.'"
    The Political Quarterly 83.2 (2012): 414-423.
When it comes to violent video games, U.K. policy seems to be the obverse of U.S. legislation and policy. Current policy observes the precautionary principle, which addresses *possible* harms of content for children. But the burden of protecting children against those harms falls almost entirely on the shoulders of parents.

Urist, Jacoba. "Could Taxing Violent Video Games Actually Save Lives?" *The Atlantic* online,
    21 February, 2013.
http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2013/02/could-taxing-violent-video-games-actually-save-lives/273379/
Frustrated with the outcome of legislation and litigation, state lawmakers are increasingly turning to the tactic of imposing what are essentially "vice" taxes on violent video games. If approved, such measures could benefit media literacy programs. The article comments on the advantages and liabilities of this approach.

Med!aLit Moments

Demolish Stereotypes and Build Confidence

In late 2012, Legos unveiled its Legos Friends line for girls, which seemed to focus more on hanging out with best friends than anything else. Girls could put together a Lego cafe or style salon if they were in a building mood. A Change.org petition to the Legos CEO bearing nearly 70,000 signatures challenged the gender stereotyping in the new line. A year later, Debbie Sterling, a recent Stanford graduate in mechanical engineering and product design, released the first GoldieBlox construction kits, which also targeted girls, but actually taught them skills in elementary mechanics.

The web and television advertising for both product lines demonstrate clear differences in the expected purposes for which the toys are to be used. And, given that these are short commercials selling a product, they are jam-packed with visual and verbal signifiers which sell the values, lifestyles and beliefs the products are supposed to represent. In this MediaLit Moment, your early elementary students will learn how to decode some of the larger clues to those values, and learn how to talk about what those values mean for girls and boys in society.

Ask students to describe the differences between advertisements for similar toys, and to explore the significance of those differences.

AHA!: The second ad actually shows girls building things!

Grade Level: 1-3

Key Question #4 for Young Children: What does this tell me about how other people live and believe? Is anything or anyone left out? (What values, lifestyles, and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?)
Core Concept #4: Media have embedded values and points of view.

Key Question #1 for Young Children: What is this? How is this put together? (Who created this message?)
Core Concept #1: All media messages are constructed.

Materials: Computer with high speed internet access, LCD projector and screen.

Activity: Begin by asking students about the kinds of toys that they like. You may wish to point out differences in preferences between boys and girls. Next, show students the Legos Friends ad:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cYW_zEYtXeQ&list=PL1E2EC6AAAD0C422B

Ask students, what kinds of things are the girls doing in this ad? Play the video at least twice, so that students can recall significant details.   Next, play a GoldieBlox ad:
http://www.goldieblox.com/pages/beastie-boys-rube-goldberg-machine

Finally, ask students what the Legos Friends and GoldieBlox ads seem to "say" about girls. What are they supposed to be like? What are they supposed to do? Is there anything in particular in the ads that tells them these things? What do they think about these messages?

Extended Activity: Turn the lesson into a multimedia activity by asking your students to come in with a favorite toy, or even the package for one of their favorite toys, and discuss the different messages about gender in their toys and the GoldieBlox video.

The Five Core Concepts and Five Key Questions of media literacy were developed as part of the Center for Media Literacy's MediaLit Kit™ and Questions/TIPS (Q/TIPS)™ framework. Used with permission, ©2002-2014, Center for Media Literacy, http://www.medialit.com