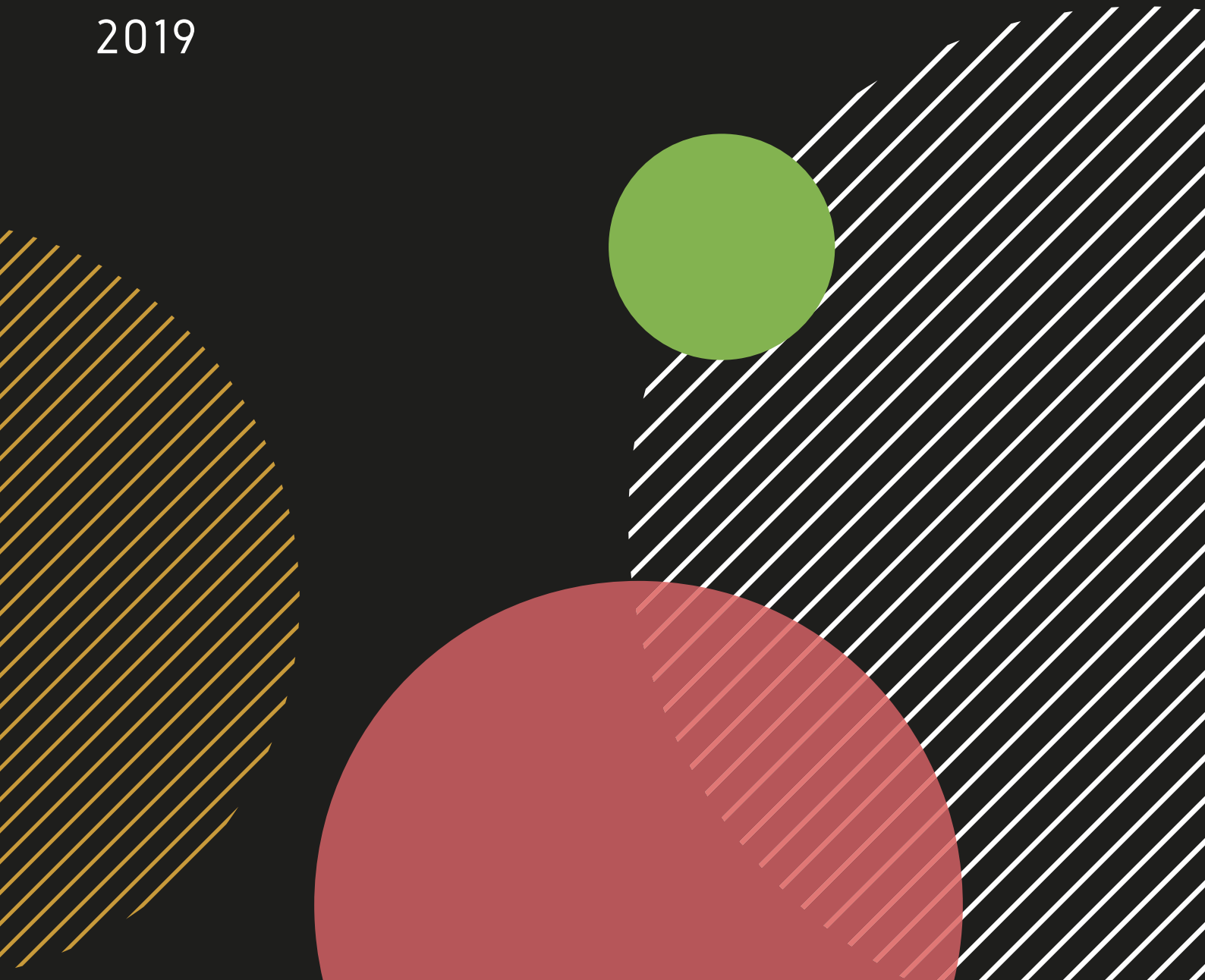


BUILDING A LEARNING COMMUNITY:

REPORT OF THE NORTHEAST REGIONAL
MEDIA LITERACY CONFERENCE

2019





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

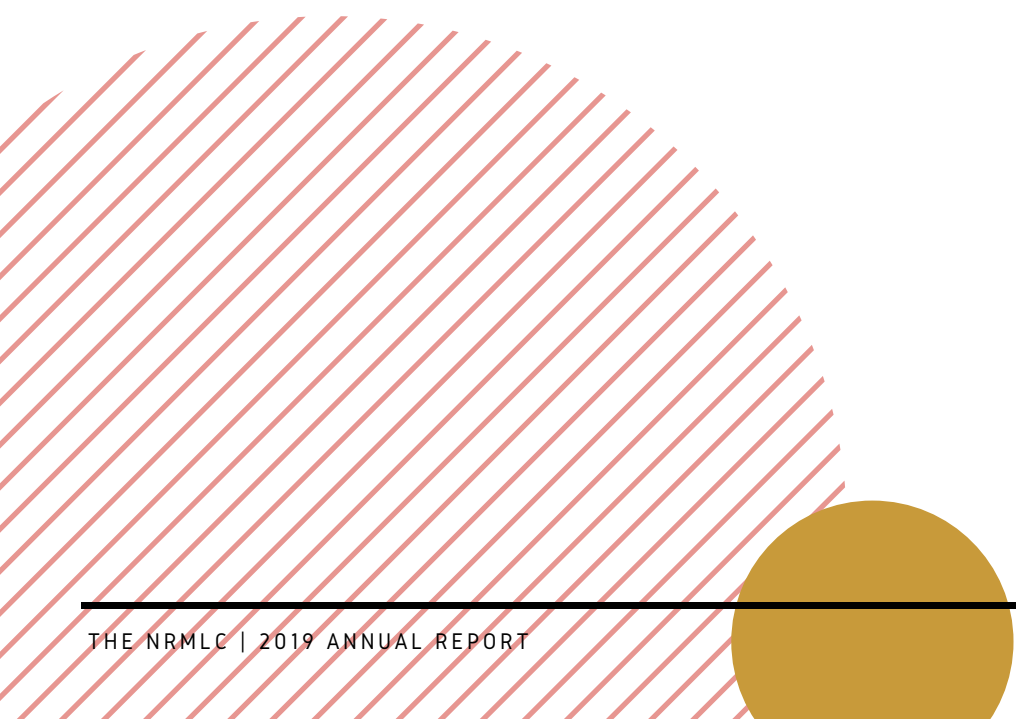
In order to ensure that all people have the opportunity to advance their media literacy competencies, the media literacy community shares information and ideas with educators, librarians, college faculty and community activists. Today, an ever-increasing number of stakeholders have gained an interest in learning how to help people of all ages understand and analyze their media-saturated lives. This report documents the key ideas that emerged from the 2019 Northeast Media Regional Literacy Conference (NRMLC), a gathering of librarians, higher education faculty, K-12 teachers, researchers, education technology specialists, and other cultural workers held on November 8-9, 2019 at Rhode Island College in Providence. The event was co-hosted by the Rhode Island College Feinstein School of Education and the Media Education Lab.

The Conference's goals were to interrogate the power and potential of media literacy as a form of lifelong learning and to share new approaches to media literacy analysis and composition, knowing that our worlds are influenced by an ever-evolving media landscape. The 2019 program included the active participation of 113 people who attended 36 workshops on a wide range of topics. The following elements were important features of the two-day event:

- **Practitioner Focus:** On Friday, November 8th, the focus of the day was on K-12 teachers, paraprofessionals, librarians, after-school program staff, and others who work in public and private elementary and secondary schools. Four 75-minute sessions offered participants the opportunity for intensive and personalized immersion into a range of instructional practices of digital media literacy education.
- **Research and Policy Focus:** On Saturday, November 9th, researchers and college faculty gathered to discuss ways to move beyond the concept of fake news to consider new paradigms around digital media as information, entertainment, and persuasion. Three 75-minute sessions explored the relationship between the theory and practice of media literacy education.

- Viewing and Discussion: Each day included a viewing-and-discussion program that was designed to model best practices in viewing and discussion as a form of inquiry learning in media literacy. On Friday, we viewed Greta Thunberg’s “You Have Stolen My Dreams” speech. On Saturday, we viewed the Vox video, “Why Obvious Lies Make Great Propaganda.” After viewing, participants gathered in groups of 5-7 people to discuss the form and content of the video. To conclude, panel members synthesized key insights from the discussion. Panel members included Ben Boyington, Michelle Ciccone, Jasmine Cook, Mary Moen, Donnell Probst, Mike RobbGreico, Gus Andrews and Julie Coiro. Carolyn Fortuna and Pam Steager served as moderators for these programs.
- New Academic Partner: The Feinstein School of Education and Human Development at Rhode Island College underwrote a significant portion of the physical setting costs. The Feinstein School is responsible for designing, developing, and implementing programs that prepare professional personnel for educator and counseling roles in schools and social service agencies that serve the needs of the diverse communities of Rhode Island. We are particularly grateful to Dean Jeannine Dingus-Eason for her generosity.

Presenters and participants were highly satisfied with the quality of the conference as a learning experience. One participant said, “The conference allowed for many vital conversations on the state and importance of media literacy education. The wide variety of participants and their relationship to media literacy studies provided many unique perspectives on the subjects being addressed.”





WHAT MEDIA LITERACY PRACTITIONERS WANT AND NEED

by Dr. Carolyn Fortuna, Event Producer

In my second year as program chair for the Northeast Regional Media Literacy Conference, I had the tremendous opportunity to plan and coordinate alongside an amazing coterie of media literacy scholars across all stages of their careers.

At the beginning of a new decade, media literacy practitioners seemed unanimous in their desire to obtain tools to mitigate the diminishing role that facts, data, and analysis play in today's political and civil discourse. Navigating an environment where false equivalence – that logical fallacy in which two incompatible arguments appear to be logically equivalent when, in fact, they are not – seems a heavy task for today's media literacy educators and cultural workers. We are hungry for strategies to evaluate sources, synthesize multiple accounts into coherent arguments, comprehend the meaning behind communications, and assume responsibility for message voice, positioning, and ownership.

Over and over again during the Conference, attendees spoke about the needs for locating, establishing, and maintaining trust in credible institutions. The practitioners, many of whom blended media literacy into other content areas and different contexts, often relied on interdisciplinary communication and collaboration to facilitate media literacy instruction and to focus on the processes that contribute to credible media or informational products, such as news reporting or scientific research.

An integrated approach has its drawbacks, however, in that media literacy practitioners are often situated in overburdened settings which presents the feeling of isolation in educational philosophy, sometimes referred to as “silos.” Yet, because individuals of all ages in the US struggle to know if the information they find online is true, authentic, and accurate, news literacy remains essential across settings beyond the typical English or history class. Separating fact from fiction is a vital skill for civic engagement, but individuals can be good fact-checkers only if they have a broader understanding of how news and information are produced and consumed in the digital age.

A message that emerged during the Conference was how imperative it is to offer media literacy practitioners toolkits which contain information about:

- the changing nature of journalism, including declining revenue and industry consolidation;
- strategies to deconstruct how news is a representation of reality, not reality itself;
- algorithms that reflect our own biases, cater to our preexisting beliefs, and create confirmation bias;
- where we favor information that fits with our beliefs;
- the distinction of selling “eyeballs to advertisers” versus our digital data trails; and,
- ways to exercise sociological imaginations, so that we can step back and ask what we really want for ourselves and our society through redefining an ideal news environment.

While news literacy isn't a solution for all literacy and political problems in the US right now, media literacy practitioners who can guide their mentees to ask questions as a starting point toward responsible citizenship can begin the journey to contributing to a healthy democracy. That was the constant refrain from the attendees at the 2019 Northeast Regional Media Literacy Conference, and the sessions and conversations were a gestalt of meaning-making from opening ceremonies on Friday through closing remarks on Saturday.



PARTICIPANTS OF DAY TWO GATHER FOR A PHOTO

SPOTLIGHT ON COMMUNITY BUILDING

by Sarah Clapp

How do a group of strangers come together to form a learning community in just two days? Opportunities for informal sharing and dialogue help people learn from each other. The Northeast Regional Media Literacy Conference attracted 113 participants who engaged in robust dialogue and learning, including 44 K-12 educators, 19 librarians, 16 non-profit leaders and entrepreneurs, 15 college professors, and 16 undergraduate students. While most conference attendees came from the New England states of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine, participants also came from New York, Maryland, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Indiana, and Colorado. International participants included individuals from the Bahamas, Canada, and Israel.

After attendees had settled into tables with colleagues and new acquaintances, Program Chair Carolyn Fortuna kicked off both day with an overview of the conference, culminating in activities that sparked conversations that would continue throughout the conference. Friday started with introductions from conference board members and next year's co-chairs, Pam Steager and Michelle Ciccione, as well as a geographic survey of where attendees had traveled from. These first remarks also addressed the core theme that the conference was designed around: Media Literacy as Lifelong Learning, an idea that celebrated the ongoing expansion of media literacy and bridged the scholarly, educational, and cultural work presented at the conference.

To inspire attendees to consider their own experience in the field and to begin making connections with others, Carolyn introduced a "give one, get one" activity. Attendees were asked to write down digital literacy activities that they had prior experience or knowledge of, and exchange with other table-mates until everyone had a robust list of new lessons to try.

This activity also illustrated the potential for fruitful reciprocity between media literacy practitioners who work in different fields, from higher education to school libraries, museums halls to pre-K classrooms.

On Saturday, after briefing new conference attendees on what to expect for the duration of the day, Carolyn brought forward another hands-on activity, directing attendees' attention to a folder of recent headlines. Each table selected one headline and the accompanying image, all related to media literacy through both their content and the avenues of analysis they presented.

From an article proclaiming science class as the "overlooked front" of misinformation, to an image of someone in a t-shirt emblazoned with the words "FAKE NEWS," there were abundant discussion topics to explore. This was certainly anticipated in the framing of the activity, which asked: "What questions should we ask as we review these recent media stories?"

There was no shortage of thoughtful, incisive questions that evoked the most urgent topics in media literacy today—both in this activity, and throughout the entire day. As table spokespeople drew attention to specific language and imagery in the sample news pieces and grappled with the reporting itself, the dynamic exchange of ideas united all conference attendees before they broke out into different sessions.

"GIVE ONE, GET ONE" ACTIVITIES REINFORCE THE IDEA THAT EVERYONE LEARNS FROM EVERYONE



SPOTLIGHT ON UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES TO MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION WITHIN U.S. PRISONS

In recent years, there have been over a dozen successful media literacy education program sessions hosted in maximum and medium-security state correctional facility libraries. Many people are unaware that US correctional facilities house nearly a quarter of the world's prison population, and that after decades-long sentences, many incarcerated people are released into a society whose patterns of media engagement are different from the media landscapes they experienced prior to their incarceration. Drew Emmanuel Berkowitz offered a presentation designed to share ways in which prison librarians and media literacy educators can work together to plan activities for environments in which digital media access is often institutionally limited.

Berkowitz is a K-12 educator, scholar, and administrator whose current work is centered within adult correctional facilities, where he teaches and practices media literacy. He focuses on “untraditional” practices of media literacy, as he teaches in places where access to education or even to open-ended learning is rather limited. This is particularly applicable when referring to the prison environment, as it is one that keeps people literally restricted.

“I want to show that there are a lot of similarities between the cutting edge and the more traditional practices when it comes to media literacy,” Berkowitz explained. “There is often a gap, as there is a difference between having new media and the ability to actually bring said new media to new places. It is critical that we bridge this gap...the current media needs to get to everyone. There are huge swaths of the country and the population that are not receiving the practices that are totally up-to-date or present.”



DREW EMANUEL BERKOWITZ,
INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR

Berkowitz's instruction centers on graphic novels, as well as fanfiction, which he started exploring because he studied this genre in relation to literacy practices while receiving his PhD in Education from Montclair State University. In his research, he recognized gaps between educators and the communities they serve. By collaborating with libraries in correctional facilities regarding their collections, he could make a coalition with the libraries for his teaching.



THERE ARE A LOT OF SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE CUTTING EDGE AND THE MORE TRADITIONAL PRACTICES WHEN IT COMES TO MEDIA LITERACY.

SPOTLIGHT ON DIGITAL STORYTELLING

SUPPORTING DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP WITH HANDS-ON MEDIA EDUCATION

Jessie Currell's passion for media literacy education is rooted in her desire to empower educators, youth, and nations to thrive in the digital world. With over 15 years of field experience building strategies and programs for Canadian students, educational institutions, and leaders, Jessie has helped teachers and schools develop preventative educational strategies that build resilience through creativity. As the founder and director of Hands-On Media Education, she helps students create their own digital stories in ways that express their unique identities and values. "Hands-on and production based workshops have significance for teachers and students," explained Currell. "It is about the creation and creative aspect of this sort of work, and in that way, I believe it is possible to teach teachers in particular how media literacy can be utilized. Video production can be intimidating for teachers, and in this way I help them to explore and to grow."

Currell focuses on creating dialogues with learners to help them appreciate what makes a good digital citizen, asking: "what does it take to be safe, responsible, and empowered?" In her instruction, Currell emphasizes the importance of giving credit for images and audio as students use and remix copyrighted work. Students learn about their own rights as digital authors when they get a chance to make projects on their own. In her programs, students create media to explore and share ideas, and Currell observed that they gain confidence in expressing "who they were, where they had been, and where they were going." In many projects, students express ideas about their interest in helping their own communities.



JESSIE CURRELL WITH HANDS-ON-MEDIA EDUCATION

Currell's experience in public and private schools reveals issues of equity that still need to be redressed. She explained that "students in certain areas have far more access than students in others." There tend to be more opportunities to include media literacy in the curriculum in private schools than in public schools. Because public schools often face constraints due to funding or the need to follow a standardized curriculum, teachers may not have access to media literacy resources or the ability to dedicate class time to the subject. With Currell's programs, she tries to convince public school leaders to not shy away from this sort of work, and she points out that adults (including educators and administrators) often need opportunities for media literacy education just as much as their students.

STUDENTS GAIN
CONFIDENCE IN
EXPRESSING WHO THEY
ARE, WHERE THEY HAVE
BEEN, AND WHERE THEY
ARE GOING.



SPOTLIGHT ON WAR OF THE WORLDS

EXPLORING FAKE NEWS WITH PRIMARY SOURCES FROM THE ROCKEFELLER ARCHIVE CENTER

The power of partnership is transformative. Marissa Vassari is an archivist at the Rockefeller Archive Center who specializes in developing educational outreach project models that help students build research and information literacy skills. Her colleague Marina Lombardo is a 5th grade teacher in the Pocantico Hills Central School District in Sleepy Hollow, New York who wanted to educate her students on the importance of understanding sources and identifying fake news. When this dynamic duo got together, they wanted to find ways for students to explore the power of primary sources as a means of understanding how knowledge is constructed.

The educator and the archivist collaborated on an educational project that helped students understand how fake information is manufactured and spread. This multi-week archival project advanced Lombardo's fifth graders' media literacy skills as they explored the legendary 1938 "War of the Worlds" broadcast, an adaptation of H.G. Well's novel performed by Orson Welles that caused panic amongst its listeners. The lessons included a visit to the Rockefeller Archive Center, student-centered mixed media presentations, and primary source document analysis in small and large groups.

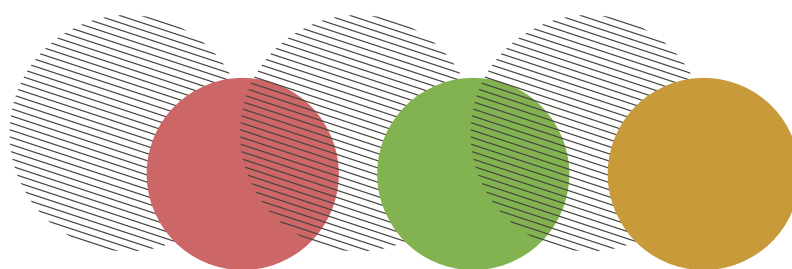
In the lessons, students discuss whether the War of the Worlds broadcast is an example of "fake news." They wonder:

- Why did the radio play contain so many experts? How did they contribute to making the play more believable?
- How might the mention of real places cause listeners to think there was really an invasion?
- How does the play transition from believable to unbelievable?
- What conflicts had radio already introduced listeners to prior to the World of the War broadcast?

When students get to spend time digging through interviews and clippings, they begin to understand how to evaluate the accuracy and relevance of the information they find. Vassari explained that, “through collaboration, we hope to show how the archival professions and teaching professions have the same goals and same spaces in mind.”

”By learning how easy it is to create fake stuff, they could consider the social and ethical dimensions of the choices made by creative people.”

Working collaboratively with Vassari, Marino Lombardo scaffolded the microskills needed to help students break down their analysis of primary sources, while always linking back to issues of contemporary media culture. “We helped children to be critical at what they are looking at,” said Vassari. When they approached the case of “The War of the Worlds,” students were able to not just analyze fake news, but also create it themselves. Students’ creative productions were so good that even some adults were fooled by their examples. By learning how easy it is to create fake things, they could consider the social and ethical dimensions of the choices made by creative people. According to Lombardo, students’ emotional skills also improved, as did their ability to write and work in school in different ways. She said, “It was also evident to us that the kids thought differently about their own lives, including the ideas of gossip and rumors in school. They were able to see how fake news enters their own space.”



SPOTLIGHT ON PORN MEDIA LITERACY

UNDERSTANDING PORNOGRAPHY IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE CHOICES WE MAKE



ODILE MATTIAUDA

While popular culture media idolizes sexuality and the internet helps bring pornography and other sexually explicit messages into the home, schools are largely silent on the topic. Indeed, a patriarchal and heteronormative framework dictates what sex and gender identities, expressions, and behaviors are seen as acceptable. The intellectual tools of media literacy education can provide learners with ways to understand pornography in relationship to the choices we make about consensual sexual exploration.

A French-born sex educator, Odile Mattiada aims to educate the public on how to support adolescents in making healthy and productive choices about their sexuality. Mattiada explains that in some places, there is no place to discuss things like this. She points out, “It is not that people are ashamed or angry. There’s just no place to acknowledge this as important to talk about it. People are often afraid of this, afraid to acknowledge or talk about it. Doing so would allow people to have a more open and honest discussion that made it less shameful to acknowledge. I want to erase that fear.”

IN MEMORIAM MOSES SHUMOW

Professor Moses Shumow of Emerson College was scheduled to give his workshop presentation with his colleague Paul Mihailidis at the Northeast Regional Media Literacy Conference.



MOSES SHUMOW

But only two weeks before the conference, Professor Shumow was killed in a tragic train accident in Boston. Formerly a professor at Florida International University (FIU), Shumow had just started teaching at Emerson, the school where he had received his master's degree in 2001. Prior to receiving his Ph.D. in communications from the University of Miami in 2010, he spent nearly a decade in documentary film, producing work for Discovery, PBS, and National Geographic. At FIU, he worked on several projects focused on marginalized and vulnerable communities. His planned talk was intended to explore the phenomenon of persistence, an approach to teaching and learning that celebrates the values of equality and inclusion through sustained civic engagement. At the Northeast Regional Media Literacy Conference, we honored the loss of this valued colleague and member of the media literacy research community with a period of silent reflection.



A FIRST-TIMER REFLECTS

BY SARAH CLAPP

I had only known about the 2019 Northeast Regional Media Literacy Conference for an hour before I knew I had to sign up. A few months before, I had graduated from college, where I discovered that I loved the intersection of writing, media, and education. Yet, I was still looking for a field that could accommodate all of my interests. I found it when I connected with Dr. Renee Hobbs about the Media Education Lab and learned about the diverse projects the lab supports and the field it represents. With Renee's recommendation to look into the conference, I scanned through the session titles and descriptions, blown away by how many of the subjects spoke directly to my curiosities. I immediately and enthusiastically registered for the conference.

I came into the weekend with an annotated schedule of programs I might like to attend, but, otherwise, didn't know what to expect. I wondered with whom I would share the experience and how accessible the information would be to someone like me, without a formal background in media literacy. With an open mind, I arrived at Rhode Island College early on Friday morning, winding my way through campus until I arrived at check-in and found a seat for breakfast.

That morning, I talked with the other people at my table before the opening remarks, finding myself side-by-side with librarians, educators, media consultants, cultural workers, graduate students, and undergrads. I didn't quite know how to introduce myself; I had graduated from college months earlier but had yet to start my career. I didn't feel like any of these titles belonged to me.

This realization led to a lot of reflection and imagination over the course of the conference. I thought a lot about myself as a student—early brushes with media in the K-12 classroom, the critical pedagogies I learned to embrace as an undergrad, recent digital projects that had excited me. But I also thought a lot about what I might like to do in the future, how media literacy fits into the work I aspire to do, and how the people assembled at the conference represented the wide variety of academic and professional paths that exist in media literacy.

"THE CONFERENCE HELPED ME REFLECT ON HOW MEDIA LITERACY FITS INTO THE WORK I ASPIRE TO DO."

While recognizing my own crossroads was central to my individual takeaway from the conference, I was equally invested in the collaboration that pervaded every session I attended. From roundtables that concluded with thoughtful questions, to hands-on activities that utilized the collective creativity of participants, to lunchtime conversations that united people of diverse perspectives, there was always an opportunity to consider and deepen ideas.

I was also impressed by the resources I was accumulating—and not just the stack of handouts that I collected as I went from program to program. I was happy to gather beautiful classroom materials designed and tested by educators and lists of resources for further content exploration, but I also found myself with more informal resources: recommendations for apps and technologies, anecdotes about trials and errors in teaching, advice on how to engage students of differing learning styles in digital storytelling, and so much more.

Seeing everyone in this media literacy community come together as a resource for each other gave me great confidence in my future in the field. Whichever path I take within it, I know that there is a vibrant network of people working on similar and interconnected work that I can return to for guidance. I believe that the NRMLC is an excellent way to join this community, no matter your background. As a newcomer, I felt welcomed, challenged to think about big ideas, and excited to continue my involvement in the future.



ENCOUNTERING THE MEDIA LITERACY COMMUNITY

VOICE OF AN UNDERGRADUATE

BY JULIA UNGER

I am a writer, I am an undergraduate student, and I am an internet aficionado. When I was six, I watched my first YouTube video: a McDonald's commercial. As I watched the video of the grotesque clown and his jangly song, I was immediately fascinated—not only with the eccentricity of the internet but with the immediacy of it. All of a sudden, this video I had only ever seen on TV was in front of me in color, and I could search for it specifically. Later, as my parents instructed me not to watch Youtube too often, all I wanted to do was get back online and explore.

As I grew up, the internet's influence increased as I participated in online communities. The internet was a way to learn about different people, places, and even time periods. Frankly, I do not remember my life without the internet. It is an odd camp in which to be, but it is one I feel has shaped me as much as any academic endeavor or area of study. In the lead-up to the NRMLC, I was intrigued to learn how the internet played a role in other people's lives and how it could create social change.

On the first day of the Conference, the focus was on educators of young people, particularly of very young children. It was made clear, through the voices of educators of young people, how much the internet and other

media can influence others in a similar way to how they influenced me. Jenn Ladner, an educator of media literacy in the “early years,” focused on how the internet is not only part of kids' lives, but nearly impossible to separate from “real life” outside of the digital world. For example, when kids as young as three years old are shown a picture of popcorn in a bowl, they believe that if you turn the picture upside down, the popcorn will fall out. What we are shown and presented is an incredible force.

Ava Montgomery's presentation, called “Media Literacy as a Social Justice Issue,” increased this perception. Her analysis of media including advertisements, newspaper articles, and clothing promoted the idea that what we make greatly influences how we feel. A Prius commercial where four white men steal a car and become national sensations and a Lays commercial where a white man steals chips and eats with an employee in the store aisle promote the idea of white men as harmless, funny, down-to-earth guys who, regardless of their potential innocence, should be assumed as “chill” anyways. In opposition to this, an article written about the Central Park Five after they were arrested referred to them as people from “fatherless homes” whose only objectives were “rob, rape, stomp, kill.”

This portrayal in the media framed the case and contributed to the prolonged imprisonment of the boys. They were considered to be scary beasts despite being young boys who had families that loved and appreciated them. With this contrast, Montgomery made clear that the way we speak about certain people promotes or even increases negative or harmful perceptions.

However, in the roundtable session, it was made clear that, regarding young people's ideas about themselves, this does not have to be true. There were examples of this in RaShawna Sydnor's presentation on "The Black Panther & The Importance of Representation." Sydnor is a seventh grade teacher in Baltimore. She spoke to the group about when she saw the superhero movie Black Panther. Her first thought was how much the movie would mean for her students—how its representations of different forms of fighting provided insight into how civil rights work can look different depending on those involved, for example. In her connection of the movie to the actual Black Panther Party, Sydnor told us how she showed her students documentaries about the party and how their responses illuminated the importance of learning about their own history. Their responses included things like "I felt really good about myself" and "I didn't know that we fought in this way." Through this presentation, the reactions on social media I saw when Black Panther came out made more sense. Messages that young people get about themselves can encourage them to be confident and to work harder.

During the Saturday activities of the conference, the presenters were more focused on media literacy as it advances the needs of older learners. Many of the presenters were scholars and academic experts. In Odile Mattiauda's presentation on porn literacy and the politics of pornography, we were provided with a lesson on what porn means in our culture and what it teaches young people about it. Mattiauda has taught sex ed for decades, and understands how something as pervasive as porn can teach people about their and others bodies. She discussed how porn shows how women's bodies are "humiliated" and how they are only there for the "pleasure" of men. This is not only confusing to teenagers, but it is influential. Young women can feel negatively about themselves and insecure in their actual romantic relationships.

The lessons I learned at this year's NRMLC centered on how powerfully media can influence us. It can make people feel empowered and positive but also confused, strange, and uncomfortable. People may have to make decisions based on ideas that emerge from media representations of their identities. This is my Conference take-away: what is most important to pay attention to with media literacy is the way that the media influences people to act in certain ways.

FIVE CONFERENCE THEMES

by DR. CAROLYN FORTUNA

In this essay, I share my reflections on the themes which emerged as patterns of meaning about the zeitgeist of media literacy at the 2019 Northeast Regional Media Literacy Conference. These themes also serve as a means to synthesize insights on the value of the conference.

1

Teaching media literacy as literacy may have never been more important than in today's world.

2

Media meanings and messages are often elusive to viewers/ listeners/ readers.

3

The ways individuals construct the Self through media is enormously complex and multi-faceted.

4

Belief systems frame the way that individuals receive, absorb, and accommodate media messages.

5

Ubiquitous persuasion within media texts requires explicit instruction so that viewers/ listeners/ readers can unpack codes.



Teaching media literacy as literacy may have never been more important than in today's world.

Literacy is a process of accessing, analyzing, evaluating, and creating messages in a wide variety of media and popular culture modes, genres, and forms. Throughout the 2019 Northeast Regional Media Literacy Conference, it became evident that participants shared an expanded conceptualization of literacy as an integral part of a shifting momentum in US public education and life. Collegial spaces such as the Conference are important so media literacy practitioners can come together to explore the place and possibility of popular and media culture texts as serious educational discourse.

Media literacy as literacy can have many consequences. It can:

- address the issues of analysis, pleasure positioning, and audience;
- deepen interactions with other texts;
- enhance comprehension of dominant media representations in US society;
- increase dialogicality; and,
- uncover multiple meanings of textuality.

The media literacy practitioners at the Conference—presenters and attendees alike—were in unison about their desire for youth and adults today to be skillful producers and consumers of media messages. In a session titled “Media Literacy Advocacy & Policy,” Steager described how media literacy is a type of “civics education.” By transforming media consumption into an active process, individuals can gain critical distance from the pervasive texts of their lives in order to acknowledge their reasons for enjoyment, the potential for persuasion through symbolic representations, and media’s ability to re-create the world. Berkowitz outlined in a session titled “Overcoming Obstacles to Media Literacy Education within US Prisons” how instructors “have to work with the tools we’re given, such as in any schooling context,” thus illuminating the reciprocal nature of media literacy from analysis, evaluation, synthesis, composition, and back again.

The Conference served to showcase media literacy as a pathway to demythologizing the world, to encouraging individuals to solve as well as to pose problems, and to introducing new versions of the Self as a skillful creator and producer of media messages. The latter is important both to facilitate understanding about the strengths and limitations of each medium and its embedded messages

as well as to spur independent media creations that coalesce into fresh introspections about the world around us.

The Conference presenters called upon a pattern of inquiry to encourage individuals to ask questions about multiple facets of media messages:

- Who are the media texts' authors?
- What is the media composer's purpose is in designing particular messages?
- Which techniques are used to attract and hold the audience' attention?
- How are cultural values and points of view represented in media texts?
- How might different people interpret media messages differently?
- Which discussions are omitted from media texts and why?



Media meanings and messages are often elusive to viewers/ listeners/ readers.

The process of making meaning, in a mediated or any kind of text, is a continual method of negotiating, internalizing, and constructing meaning. Structural features—such as media ownership and political ideologies—are built into message design but can be difficult to discern.

An audience member's contact with media and popular culture can unknowingly frame self-concepts, attitudes, and behaviors. Frechette, in a session titled "Understanding Public Opinion Formation in the Digital Age through Critical Media Literacy," pointed out that social media can lend to "immediate opinions" based on a small amount of information, so much so that a story can get thousands of retweets—"ideological, political, or otherwise." She questioned, "Who controls the architecture(s) of digital technology, and how do they use it?" and outlined media architecture designed to determine and influence audiences—big data, microtargets, surveillance, geo-location, data mining, psycho graphics, and aptivity as part of a political economy.

Moreover, some individuals use the media's compelling story lines and appealing images as role models for their own behaviors. Attitudes, judgments, and actions can be guided by media exposure to the point where real-world beliefs and behaviors become indistinguishable from those portrayed by the media. Hains, in a session called "Children, Gender Stereotypes, and Career Counseling," noted that the role models children see on screens help them "understand what is on screens is what is available for careers." It is "frustrating in society," she continued, when, such as in pre-school,

“boys are in the corner with their magnetic tiles, trains, and cars,” when the girls in some contexts are being told in a “binary force, ‘Are you playing mommy?’”

Media messages are embedded with dominant cultural codes that the receiver can reconceptualize, if he or she so desires, within some alternative framework of reference to join a struggle in discourse. Epiphanies about freedom and equity in society can also occur when individuals step back, analyze, and compose with real-life popular and media culture texts. Yet that critical distance must be accompanied by self-awareness and receptivity to unpack media messages, even when the revelations are unexpected or disturbing.



The ways individuals construct the Self through media is enormously complex and multi-faceted.

Media influences do not just exist separately for individuals through neutral screens. First impressions, pervasive mythologies, public performances, clichés, aphorisms, and celebrity opinions can all translate into immediate meanings through media texts.

Presenters referred to many of the dilemmas that exist around media literacy due to identity work, citing prevailing issues of disjuncture and contradiction. Coiro in a session titled “Understanding How Students Learn and Reason Together During Digital Inquiry” contrasted the distinct values when we ask students to compose. By valuing what they “do well individually,” we identify, “Is the goal to get it done fast? Or is it about building relationships? Is it more than a score? Is it about getting along?” Stanley found similarly in a session titled “Capturing Critical Thinking in Action: Using Screencasting as a Tool for Student Engagement and Report Back” that, when asked to co-construct, students would “wonder if the collaborative task would be considered cheating.”

Media literacy practitioners often confront a deep connection between media representations and individuals’ worldviews about social and cultural phenomena, so that those worldviews can conflict with social justice philosophies. Constructing the Self through media can also lead to particular interpretations of the world, due to algorithms that filter specific versions of topics and issues. To some audiences, for example, media messages about a “liberal bias” indoctrinate individuals citizens into a left-wing ideology and discriminate against conservatives.

Yet there are approaches to dismantle media barriers to critical thinking. Expressive inquiry is an alternative, Redmond explained in a session titled “Critical Enjoyment and Advocacy through Advertising,” moves from creative expression in which popular culture “reclaims and adjusts” existing narratives into new and contemporary contexts. There is an emancipatory element when we engage in activities toward deconstructing, she revealed, such as when students engage in “ad busting. Students can shift the meaning of the ad, perhaps, toward empowerment,” so that when they engage in collaborative inquiry, the value is “not in the art but in the articulating.”

Frank Romanelli, in a session titled “Undergraduate Digital Writing and Rhetoric in a Project Based Environment,” talked about a project-based learning class he teaches that, by design, is without a final exam. Instead, 10 projects are presented to an invited public group. “High school students were blown away by the knowledge that the college students were able to share,” he reminisced. The younger students seemed not to recognize that adults “do this all the time with each other—” that process of stepping away from media texts and asking questions of audience and authorship, meanings and messages, representations and reality.

Media literacy can help individuals to dismantle media filters and reinvent the Self. It can:

- relate how all messages are designed carefully through language and images;
- describe how texts contain symbol systems with codes and conventions;
- reveal how texts have messages that are embedded with cultural values and points of view;
- explain how different people interpret messages in text differently;
- and, convey how text messages are constructed to obtain objectives like cultural transmission of knowledge, profit, and/ or power.



Belief systems frame the way that individuals receive, absorb, and accommodate media messages.

Media—and all messages—are ideological. Cultural transmission of ways of being are mediated alongside a schema of formats and tools that comprise textual production and transmission. With the proliferation of digital media and other forms of technologically mediated communication comes the capacity for media sites to construct social relationships and systems of knowledge and belief.

Because these systems change the way that individuals perceive media texts, many of the Conference practitioners referred to media “Othering” of non-centrist, non-middle class culture. Frohlich spoke during a session titled “Developing a Responsive and Adaptable Emergent Media Curriculum” about dialogicality in an Emergent Media course where students described Twitter as their primary news. What they failed to discern was, she suggested, when they “unfriend” others, they “don’t see the other side of the issue.”

It became clear as the Conference progressed that the media practitioners’ journey to understand “the Other” must be founded on an acceptance that analysis is mediated through our own interpretive lens and can only be a partial knowledge – to see beyond the immediately visible.

Being exposed to media is never a passive process, and audiences bring to media texts a range of interpretative strategies which enable them to read signs in particular and individual ways. Ava Montgomery, who led a session titled “Media Literacy as a Social Justice Issue,” noted, “I often hear, ‘Now, more than ever’ consumers must be vigilant in recognizing ‘fake news.’ Yet false narratives and misrepresentations, or fake news about people of color, have historically been part and parcel of media.”


“So, consciously speaking, everyone on the media continuum has a responsibility to be consciously vigilant.”

It became evident during the Conference that one of the highest forms of media literacy practice was advocacy. Everyday media texts illustrate the potentials of critically engaged multimodal approaches that allow us to recognize the ways in which we might step up and advocate and how to do so. When we consider multimodal communication as urgent advocacy, given the ease and rapidity with which content is created, circulated, and consumed, digital media platforms are much more than disseminators of ideology – they have the potential to facilitate interaction among the public, and it is a sometimes overwhelming task for media literacy practitioners to offer a pathway to such individual voice and agency.



Ubiquitous persuasion within media texts requires explicit instruction so that viewers/ listeners/ readers can unpack codes.

Media messages are, by nature, recontextualizations, or messages that have extracted text, signs, or meaning from one context and molded it into another context.



Sign-systems, including interpersonal language, other media, and other areas of discourse, create a social reality to which audiences respond. Hobbs related in a session titled “Activating Inquiry through Global Propaganda” that her students thought propaganda “was something that happened in the 20th century in Germany.” Propaganda had different meanings to attendees in this session, including “intentional,” “by any means necessary,” “systematic,” “something that propelled to action” “influencing,” “truthfulness,” and “coalition.”

Shriver reminded us in a session titled “Can You Spot a Fake?” that we should not “underestimate how much one audience knows about a certain topic in comparison to other people.” Through direct instruction and guided discourse, media literacy practitioners can build toward an understanding of media as an important marker of dominant ideologies and reflections of particular constructions of individuals, families, communities, and society. Individuals can come to new understandings about different media and the media’s necessary semiotic processes which are never divorced from the verbal.

While seemingly straightforward media telecasts do often decode in a hegemony of the dominant code, media literacy practitioners can connect prejudice, race, gender, and other sociocultural constructs to about the Other to alternative social discourses and structures. In a session titled “Porn Media Literacy,” Mattiauda revealed how “we’ve become pornified,’so that things that weren’t shared before openly in the media are “playing at the IMAX.” Media literacy can invite webs of possibility within shared conversations, as dialogicality can produce layers of revelations about subjugation, hierarchies, power distributions, racism, and misogyny.

Explicit instruction in persuasion can deepen understandings of and build upon new methods to create alliances across multiple manifestations of ways of being, of additional recontextualizations of media messages and of a melange of individuals who struggle for a more diverse and democratic world of literacy, information, and communication about media representations and messages. Individuals who are outsiders to structures of privilege or status can be drawn into mediation of meaning through popular and media culture textual analysis and their own semiotic recontextualizations.

VIEWING AND DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES

BY SARAH CLAPP

At the end of a full day of self-directed learning, we had the opportunity to come together for a final Viewing and Discussion session to cap off each day. Both sessions were anchored by videos relevant to the media literacy topics that had been raised at roundtables and presentations. It made sense to conclude each session this way, inspired by a common practice and pedagogy in media literacy that invites spirited discussion in response to a piece of media.

You Have Stolen My Dreams

On Friday, we viewed Greta Thunberg’s speech “You Have Stolen My Dreams and My Childhood,” which she had recently delivered at the UN climate action summit in New York. The speech was familiar to many, as it had spread across social media and been widely excerpted by media outlets.

“How dare you?” Thunberg says before plainly stating the speech’s title phrase. She is met with applause, but the viewer cannot see from whom. It looks like Thunberg is alone on stage, perhaps at a podium. (Later, we learn that she’s actually sitting on a panel, leaning in toward a microphone in front of her seat.) Throughout the speech, she shames her audience of world leaders for their inaction and empty gestures while providing “crystal clear” scientific evidence for the severity of the climate crisis. She speaks on behalf of generation of young people inheriting a carbon-laden atmosphere and an idle political system: “if you choose to fail us, we will never forgive you.”

The content of Thunberg’s speech evoked strong praise from the room. People at my table praised her incisive critique of power, but we quickly turned our attention to how her message had been transmitted through the media landscape. We shared where we had first heard of the speech and how it had been framed by different online communities and media outlets; we had all seen some commentators celebrating Thunberg’s strong indictment of political leaders, and others who used her age to invalidate her words or suggest that she was being coached by her parents. These divergent perspectives sparked further discussion on how youth activists are made visible or invisible by the media and what it means when challenges to power are embraced or belittled.


We also dug into the essential questions of media literacy, wondering who the intended (and actual) audience was, what techniques had been employed in its filming and dissemination, and how people with different ideologies would interpret the video. When some noticed that Thunberg’s language spoke to a greater generational tension surrounding climate change, the room became split. Some embraced this analysis while others challenged it for being a superficial categorization when the real divide was between the disempowered and powerful. It was interesting to see that while there was often consensus throughout the conference, that there was still room for productive and impassioned debate.

Once the panelists had assembled at the front of the room to share these ideas and the floor was opened to more exchange, a final question emerged: what would a socially responsible press look like? When it comes to coverage of the climate crisis in “the media” (a term that attendees had contested as being vague), it seems as if not enough is being done to hold institutions accountable to the environmental harm they perpetuate. It was exciting that these kinds of questions with deep societal implications could be raised from one short viral video.

Why Obvious Lies Make Great Propaganda

On Saturday, the panel screened “Why obvious lies make great propaganda,” a Vox video about the propaganda models shared by Presidents Putin and Trump. By showcasing the frequent and persistent lies that Trump and his associates have told, the video makes the case that these falsehoods are successful because they are bold-faced and abundant, overwhelming the public with misinformation and making it nearly impossible to fact-check.

Meanwhile, this style of “firehose propaganda” is also used by Vladimir Putin, who is known to completely reverse his statements after steadfastly standing by a lie. While the video uses interviews with experts and cites research by the RAND Corporation, it also uses humorous sketches to hone in on the absurdity of this kind of propaganda. With satirical asides and fast-paced cuts from cable news segments and press conferences, the video appeals to a younger audience, familiar with the “explainer” video format.



Yet, it also seems like the video isn't necessarily meant to convince someone that Trump lies, but rather to show someone who already believes that he spreads misinformation how he gets away with it. Attendees considered who the video is intended for and discussed the content itself, which was directly relevant to conversations about news literacy and propaganda that had happened earlier.

In the conversation at my table, we shared our emotional reactions to the video. Our group of media literacy savvy individuals felt the familiar sense of disillusionment, frustration, and anger that accompanies the vast misinformation that runs rampant in the media. We talked about the belief systems that we hold and how it feels when what we believe to be true is unjustly undermined. But we wondered if that feeling was universal. Is everyone aware of this twisted form of reality making, how (mis)information is deliberately advanced to manipulate our attitudes and social relationships? And could the humor in the video detract from the forcefulness of its argument, leaving the viewer feeling apathetic rather than incensed? Or, could comedy like this successfully illuminate the absurd elements of a real life situation? For me, these questions helped demonstrate the relevance of media education, and the direct role that we can play in helping others deepen their news literacy.

These questions also had us all considering whether we would use this video in a classroom. Some thought it would be great and capture the same high level of discourse at the panel, while others felt that it might advance a political agenda that could alienate some students. Educators offered other educators advice for setting discussion boundaries or folding the themes of the video into a broader curriculum. The advice was specific and universal at the same time; it made me envision how I'd introduce the piece to students, even though I don't have a classroom or school environment of my own to reference.

Having the time and space to voice final reflections from the day, to pull together thoughts that we had gathered during morning presentations and lunchtime conversations, made for a meaningful and memorable conclusion to each day. After navigating the conference on our own accord and internalizing the ideas that resonate with our own experiences and visions of media literacy, it was important to have the opportunity to congregate, share, and raise up overarching themes in union. In the quiet of the car ride home each day, I thought a lot about these final panels--not just because they were fresh in my mind, but because they represented the diverse perspectives and staggering breadth that make media literacy so rich of a field.

PROGRAM EVALUATION DATA

by RENEE HOBBS

Program evaluation is a process that relies on frank and candid feedback. We asked participants to complete a program evaluation at the end of each day. When asked to evaluate elements of the program on a four-point scale that included excellent, good, OK and poor, nearly all participants felt that the quality of presenters was excellent or good. Similarly, nearly all participants rated the content and topics of the program as excellent or good. A large majority of participants felt the length of the program was excellent or good. While most participants valued the whole-group activities (including the opening session and the viewing and discussion), 11 rated it as OK. While most participants rated the cost of the program as excellent or good, 16 rated it as OK or poor.

Participants gave differing assessments of the quality of the website and online communication, with 50 participants rating it excellent or good and 20 rating it OK or poor. Finally, most found the food and refreshments to be good, with 23 rating it excellent and 7 rating it OK.

HIGHLIGHTS. Participants appreciated the diversity of program content. They valued the diversity of speakers and subjects and recognized the gathering as a strong community of educators and media practitioners. One participant said, “It was easy to find something interesting in every time slot!” Others noted that they encountered ideas that they could make immediate use of in the classroom or library. Another wrote, “Being a first time participant, I liked the opportunity to sit in and not feel like I had to answer questions but could just listen and enjoy the discussions.” Regarding the roundtable discussion, one participant noted, “It was nice to hear so many ideas in a short time. I found it interesting that there was some cross connections from table to table which really added to the information gathered.”

LOWLIGHTS. Participants did not feel that the roundtable sessions were well organized. Some participants did not know how to find a particular session they were interested in, as there was no signage to guide them. Others noticed that not all presenters were respectful of the strict time limits. One participant wrote, “The transitions from round table to round table were not strictly enforced so moving from table to table was awkward if your table ran over. Some participants did not like that sessions and roundtables were scheduled simultaneously. Some people wished that certain roundtables had been presented as sessions. Other participants wished for program content to be available online.

RECOMMENDING THE CONFERENCE TO OTHERS. Participants were asked to rate their likelihood of recommending this conference to others. More than half of participants (51.3%) rated it as a 9 or 10, making them very likely to promote the conference to others. Another 35% of participants rated in a 7 or 8, making them passive, or only somewhat likely to recommend the conference to others. 11% of participants are detractors, or likely to not recommend the conference to others. In calculating an overall measure of the quality of customer relationships, detractors are subtracted from promoters, leading to a net promoter score of 40. Clearly, participants were highly engaged participants and satisfied with the nature of this unique learning experience.



PARTICIPANTS LISTEN TO INTRODUCTIONS



WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

by DR. CAROLYN FORTUNA

The Northeast Regional Media Literacy Conference has a long and distinguished history of supporting the advancement of knowledge and practice in media literacy education. The conference has been held annually for 14 years. In 2019, the conference is co-sponsored and hosted by the Feinstein College of Education and Human Development at Rhode Island College. In 2018, the conference was hosted by the University of Rhode Island College of Education and Professional Studies and in 2017, the conference was hosted by Central Connecticut State University. From 2005 to 2016, the conference was supported by the University of Connecticut Neag School of Education under the leadership of Dr. Thomas Goodkind. During all this time, the conference has been organized and sustained by a group of volunteers who offer service for the benefit of the media literacy community.

To run a small conference is a relatively huge task. It requires hundreds and hundreds of volunteer hours from a very small coterie of individuals. It takes a keen eye for quality to balance the conference programming and logistical costs, and it can be challenging to imagine what will likely be pressing in contemporary society in the six-month window before the actual conference date.

In reflecting on our learning experience, we had a lot of which to be proud at the 2019 Northeast Regional Media Literacy Conference. A wide array of media literacy practitioners across fields and perspectives gathered on a cold and raw long weekend in November to breathe in media literacy air. We savored meeting other like-minded people who often researched alone and without financial compensation, augmenting a more mainstream career like English teacher or technology integration specialist with constant and invigorating media literacy analysis and composition. Our laughter floated into the air long after the Conference day officially ended.

A team of individuals across generations and careers formed the planning team for the Conference. Carolyn Fortuna served as program chair for the second year, with Pam Steager as vice chair. Ben Boyington, Karen Capraro, Michelle Ciccone, Jenn Ladner, Bethany Larrañaga, Mary Moen, Rose Pierre-Louis, and Frank Romanelli were board members. Exhibitors included IDigitMedia, Screen Savvy Kids, Emerson College Graduate School, Rhode Island College Graduate School, the Media Education Lab, and the

Media Education Foundation. The Media Education Lab at the University of Rhode Island continued again in 2019 to provide significant logistical support to the Northeast Regional Media Literacy Conference, including budgeting and marketing support. Dr. Renee Hobbs mentored the board in philosophical perspectives about the power and place of media literacy in contemporary society, and modeled a variety of digital tools for communication, outreach, and marketing. She offered welcoming remarks both days and facilitated 2 sessions.

But, of course, there were challenges that we now can reflect upon and from which we can learn. New instructional approaches like round-robin presentations may not sit well with all audience members, due to some individuals' need for more sustained analysis and deconstruction. Costs are always a concern, both from the Conference board's perspective and that of attendees, many of whom have little to no financial assistance from their employers. As the conference attracts more attendees, future NRMLC conference organizers may be able to hire keynote speakers rather than offer introductory icebreakers.

They may be able to reserve more breakout rooms, hire administrative assistants to help with mundane clerical tasks, offer more elaborate food choices, provide swag, and create an enhanced aesthetic through more diverse promotional material, both prior to and during the Conference itself.

But the gift of the media literacy community is in its giving, isn't it? In this respect, the 2019 Northeast Regional Media Literacy shined. It carried on the legacy of its original founder at the University of Connecticut, Dr. Thomas Goodkind, who aimed to bring together veteran and novice media literacy practitioners so that a regional cohort could form and bloom. I know that my own media literacy community is grounded in those early UConn conferences, and it is my hope that those who attended this year's Conference will, too, have a newly expanded network from which to draw and grow. All learning is social, right? We learned a great deal from each other at this year's NRMLC.



DR. CAROLYN FORTUNA SPEAKS
WITH A CONFERENCE ATTENDEE



LOOKING AHEAD FROM THE 2020 NORTHEAST MEDIA LITERACY CONFERENCE CO-CHAIRS

by PAM STEAGER and MICHELE CICCIONE

We learned a great deal from participant evaluations from NRMLC19 and are utilizing that data in planning the 2020 conference. We have already met several times to process feedback and chart the way forward. We agree with the appreciation that many had for the opportunities for learning, conversation and fellowship with presenters and fellow attendees. We were impressed by both the number and excitement level of the attendees for whom NRMLC19 was their first media literacy event, and we clearly heard the suggestions for improvement provided by conference veterans. NMLC 2020 is still in the early planning stage, but in response to 2019 participant comments, we are pleased to share a few ideas we are working on:

- The launch of the new Northeast Media Literacy Conference (notice we dropped the R) website in March, and the Call for Proposals opening in May
- A half day Friday pre-conference workshop to introduce the field of media literacy education to media literacy newcomers and anyone who would appreciate a refresher course
- A Friday evening welcome and introductions kickoff event for socializing and hearing about the presenters and sessions for Saturday in a fun way
- An all-day Saturday conference in early to mid-November, exact date TBA
- A diverse program of workshops, panels, roundtables, and keynotesDiverse participation from professions and academic fields relevant to digital and media literacy

Whatever the result of the November election, 2020 will undoubtedly see even greater understanding and attention provided to the need for media literacy education. We're excited about gathering and growing our community that month to discuss how to support that effort and our own practice as we enter the new Roaring 20s.

Hope to see you there.

NORTHEAST REGION MEDIA LITERACY CONFERENCE 2019 LIST OF PRESENTATIONS AND WORKSHOPS

Joining Forces To Fight Disinformation In Its Diverse Forms

GILLIAN “GUS” ANDREWS, Keep Calm and Log On

Understand that disinformation can appear in many media forms. Become familiar with existing efforts to fight disinformation and identify effective and ineffective tactics to deal with different forms of disinformation.

A Glimpse into the Inner World of Teenagers through their Films

DORIT BAILIN, Head of Film and Communication Programs,
Ministry of Education, ISRAEL

Today, there are over 400 film and communication departments in high schools in Israel. Students, from 10th to 12th grade, are learning directing, production, cinema history etc. Each year, the graduates are required to team up and create a film. The process of finding a subject for the film is very personal. Every year we see how children open their heart and show us their inner world in movies.

Music for Media Literacy in the Classroom

JILLIAN BELANGER, (Nowell Academy, Providence), FRANK ROMANELLI (URI), MICHAEL ROBBGRIECO (Windham Southwest S.U., Vermont)

Three educators share examples of classroom applications of using music for a variety of purposes in different learning spaces—university, high school, and teacher education classrooms. Attendees will participate in activities, share experiences, and create a fuller understanding of the importance of music as a component of media literacy. Examples include critical analysis of music videos, creating+sharing autobiographical playlists, and jamming out to some sh*t that slaps. If you're looking for an excuse to infuse your day with some Beyoncé, this is it.

Overcoming Obstacles to Media Literacy Education within US Prisons

DREW EMANUEL BERKOWITZ, Independent Scholar

This presentation draws on over a dozen successful media literacy education program sessions hosted in maximum and medium-security state correctional facility libraries. United States correctional facilities house nearly a quarter of the world's prison population, many of whom are released after decades-long sentences into a society whose patterns of media engagement are distressingly different from the media landscapes they experienced prior to their periods of incarceration. The goal of this presentation is to share ways in which prison librarians and media literacy educators can work together and plan activities for environments in which digital media access is often institutionally limited.

Cutting Through the Clutter: Political Advertising and Rhetoric

BEN BOYINGTON, Global Critical Media Literacy Project

Discuss political advertising and rhetoric, with a focus on social media, to explore how it affects voting, political understanding, and public discourse. Understand the language of persuasion and learn deconstruction strategies relevant for classroom applications. In the 21st century, our personal and shared visions of “teacher” continue to be influenced via digital and media formats. How do students intending to enroll in a teacher education program position themselves in terms of their own personal vision? What strong strong and lasting impressions related to their vision of “teacher” have been cultivated through repeated exposure to these digital and media formats?



A CONFERENCE ATTENDEE
LISTENS DURING A SESSION

Reflecting On Our Developing Teacher Identities

KAREN CAPRARO, Feinstein School of Education, Rhode Island College

During this roundtable presentation, attendees will hear how students, when charged with creating a media composition comparing and contrasting their developing teacher identity with the representations of teachers found in popular culture, responded to that charge.

Media Creation in Action: MLE Collaborative Principles in the Classroom

CARL CASINGHINO, Suffield High School, CT

This session offers practical examples and resources for project-based learning in the creation of media messages, along with opportunities for collaborative dialogue among peers. I will present cases of actual projects and describe how students are guided from development through completion, including the use of planning techniques, lesson structure, feedback, and peer- and self-assessment. Samples of recent student work will be presented and discussed, and educators will have opportunities to offer input and share perspectives. Work links to themes and builds on cases explored in my JMLE article concerning collaboration and feedback in the media literacy and production classroom.

Shifting Teacher Beliefs Through Digital Citizenship

MICHELLE CICCONE, Foxborough High School MA

A chasm persists in education, where some classrooms are led by early adopters of digital technologies and pedagogy and some are led by those reluctant to take on digital literacy at all. Can an expansive definition of digital citizenship, one that calls for the participation of informed users of digital technologies — teacher and student alike — motivate teachers, who are driven by a desire to positively impact students and society at large, so that all educators can come to see themselves as digital literacy teachers? This presentation will share some early findings in an action research project exploring this idea.

Understanding How Students Learn and Reason Together During Digital Inquiry

JULIE COIRO, Associate Professor, University of Rhode Island

Join us to learn about the features of a scenario-based virtual world platform designed to support the joint coordination of digital literacy skills (e.g., locating, evaluating, and synthesizing digital sources) and social deliberation skills in the context of a single scenario-based activity. We'll also discuss examples of how pairs of high school age learners construct meaning together in face-to-face and remote contexts while engaged in the online inquiry activity.

Empowering Teachers with Digital Storytelling

JESSIE CURRELL, Hands On Media Education

Easily adaptable to a wide variety of themes, a Digital Story is a personal narrative created by weaving digital photographs, video, voice, text and music into a digital video project. In this three-hour PD workshop, educators are introduced to the experience of developing 2-3 minute narratives, plus important strategies for managing the creation of powerful and engaging digital stories in the classroom. This workshop is a great opportunity for educators to develop their technological know-how and digital skills, while learning more about themselves & students in their own communities.

Children, Gender Stereotypes, and Career Counseling

LAURIE DICKSTEIN-FISCHER AND REBECCA HAINS,
Salem State University MA

We share findings of our research on media literacy, gender stereotypes, and careers as we expand discourses on media literacy in relation to counseling psychology. In one-on-one interviews, we introduced sixteen elementary school children (ages 6 to 8) to counter-stereotypical characters from children's television show *Annedroids*, including a girl scientist and a sentient, non-gendered, humanoid robot. We also examined participants' adherence to gender stereotypes before and after viewing and discussing several *Annedroids* clips. Then, as a transfer task, we introduced each participant to PABI@ (Penguin for Autism Behavioral Interventions), Dickstein-Fischer's non-gendered "autism robot." Results indicate that some participants' gender-role beliefs did become more flexible after viewing, which has implications for the integration of media literacy experiences into elementary school counseling regarding careers and self-concept.



Digital and Media Literacy in Grades 6 -12

CAROLYN FORTUNA, IDigitMedia, Media Education Lab,
and Rhode Island College

Participants will learn how to conduct analysis and digital media composition based on standards, using a variety of digital texts, tools, and technologies. These will help foster challenging and engaging learning opportunities. By drawing direct connections to real world issues, teachers will encourage students to question and re-think the world inside and outside their classrooms, build a more equitable, multicultural society, and become active digital citizens. After exploring ready-to-use materials, applying rigorous standards, and planning ways to incorporate research-based teaching practices, participants will leave the workshop with ideas and tools for transforming classrooms with a repertoire of social justice-based digital media strategies.

Understanding Public Opinion Formation in the Digital Age through Critical Media Literacy

JULIE FRECHETTE, Worcester State University

Political elections and public opinion are being shaped by sophisticated means that involve data mining, algorithms, microtargeted ads, psychographics and surveillance. Today, ad buyers and political groups alike can select and target audiences based on a series of personal markers that can include a user's geo-location, political leanings, and a series of personal interests. Ranging from as many as 1.5 billion daily users of social networks to as few as 20 people, microtargeting services can weaponize ad technology to try to influence consumer and voter behavior in any demographic area. I discuss the need for critical digital media literacy education curricula and initiatives to help apprise students, parents, and educators of data mining services by big tech giants to influence democracy and commerce through microtargeting, political partisanship.

Developing a Responsive and Adaptable Emergent Media Curriculum

DENNIS FROHLICH & DAVID MAGOLIS, Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania

As educators, how do we prepare college students not just for today's careers, but also for lifelong competencies with media? The Mass Communications department at Bloomsburg University has developed a major and minor around Emergent Media. Media literacy is the foundation, as we teach students how to be competent producers and consumers of digital media. In this session, we will assist other educators in finding ways to make their curricula responsive and adaptable to a rapidly changing media environment.

AdSavvy Kids: Student Learning In Action

NICOLE GALIPEAU, Bristol-Warren Regional School District, & JENNIFER LADNER, Screen Savvy Kids

Students are spending the equivalent of a 40-hour work week with screens – how do we as educators teach and empower our students to use media as a tool instead of just a toy? As a media education specialist and a teacher-librarian, we share ideas for practical application to teach students media literacy skills and concepts – for the school setting and for life-long learning.

Activating Inquiry through Global Propaganda

RENEE HOBBS, Media Education Lab, University of Rhode Island

Propaganda from around the world can be fascinating, and it can also open up the intellectual curiosity of learners, creating opportunities to develop research skills and digital literacy competencies. In this lesson demonstration, you'll see how global propaganda can be used in English language arts, history and health classes to advance student learning.

Media Literacy as Lifelong Learning: The Early Years

JENN LADNER, Screen Savvy Kids

This session is designed to give educators practical ways for integrating media literacy into the curriculum at the elementary level. Participants in this session will leave with examples of hands-on activities that they can use in their classroom. Activities include: Digital Photography, Storytelling with Computers and Make Your Own Audiobook.

Expanding on Climate Change and the Media: What's Coal Got to Do with It?

KRISTINA MARKOS (Simmons University) & CAROLYN FORTUNA (IDigitMedia & Media Education Lab)

We explore clean energy, climate change and emphasis on coal and innovation in the energy sector and how those entities are portrayed/discussed in the media and in pop culture. Audiences need to gain a global perspective, in terms of coal usage, to truly understand the dynamics at play for climate change. However, what many media outlets fail to do in the US and in Western countries is discuss the developing world's dependence on coal, and how it directly impacts the entire globe. Our presentation uncovers the dynamics at play, provides statistical data about the energy sources the world is consuming, and gives context into how marketplace perceives the information given to it based on reports from the media and influencers and social media.

Porn Media Literacy

ODILE CLAIRE MATTIAUDA, Rhode Island College

This interactive session examines how, while public discourse often either silences (school curricula, news media), or reifies (popular culture media) sexuality, internet mainstream sexually explicit messages informed by a patriarchal framework normalize stereotypical sexual and gendered identity, expression, and behavior. Together, we explore how porn and media literacy provides us and our youth tools towards “educated,” healthy, and consensual sexual exploration.



PARTICIPANTS LAUGH DURING A SESSION

Digital and Media Literacy for Research and Computer Skills

BARBARA MILLER, Glocester, Rhode Island

Teaching digital literacy at the K-5 level acknowledges that young children have some degree of exposure to the digital world. However, all need guidance in how to respond to and communicate information digitally. Teaching these skills is more than replacing paper practices with digital apps. Children need to develop habits of mind that will equip them to navigate through the digital world and become effective and efficient users of digital information. Join this library/ digital media specialist as she models her journey to develop the topics of digital and media literacy in 2 divisions: research and computer skills. You'll come away with resources for each category in the form of informational articles, videos, and/ or slide presentations that could be used to build and support digital literacy lessons.

Fun Hooks and Free Resources to Teach News Literacy

MARY MOEN, Assistant Professor, Harrington School of Communication and Media, University of Rhode Island

Learn fun hooks to guide students into more serious critical thinking and analysis skills for news and information. Explore Allsides, a free educational website that provides news from diverse perspectives and teacher resources to support news literacy, civil dialogue and life skills. You'll find a plethora of ideas to engage your students in media literacy, balanced news consumption, and more!

Media Literacy as a Social Justice Issue

AVA MONTGOMERY, Conscious Media Consulting

This session is for participants who seek to be more culturally responsive in media literacy education. In this highly visual, interactive and engaging presentation, participants will view historical media through lenses of people who have been historically and are currently marginalized by the media and in the media. Participants will gain an understanding of how historical narratives and representations impact media creation, self-esteem and societal protections today. Some current "hot topics" in national media discourse-particularly those specific to African American/Black women and Black communities will inform and engage the discussion.

Teens Make Movies

SEJAL PATEL, Beaver Country Day School, MA

Making movies is all the rage among teenagers. What do they make movies about? They think, write, act, and collaborate creatively to make movies. Learn more about the topics, themes, and content they produce and share. The presentation will include viewing and discussing videos made by high school students. As a visual arts teacher, I see value in empowering teens to use video as a tool for both genuine self-expression and critical thinking when making and sharing videos on the internet.

The “Writing” Side of Media Literacy: Digital Writing Processes and Projects for the Classroom

BRETT PIERCE, Meridian Stories

Digital writing, inside of an educational context, can be understood as the collaborative process of creating narratives that address core curricula using imagery, text, sound and music. With the emergence of YouTube as a) the most popular online destination for youth; and b) a validating publishing platform for youth’s digital writing work, we, as educators, have to look at Digital Writing skills as essential to preparing youth for the future. This hands-on workshop will take participants through the process – no media production skills necessary! – and deliver a variety of activities to bring to classrooms and libraries.

Media Literacy in Practice: How to Use PBS and NPR Resources to Foster Media Literacy Learning

ROSE PIERRE-LOUIS AND JON RUBIN, Connecticut and Rhode Island PBS

How do you teach a life skill like media literacy? There is no longer any doubt that today’s students need to develop stronger media literacy and critical thinking skills. But how do we ensure that we give students the skills they need to succeed as digital learners and citizens? Moreover, how do we support educators with media literacy education and tools for their classroom? Join Connecticut Public and Rhode Island PBS for a workshop with free tools for students and educators to help level up their media literacy skills. This workshop will be an interactive presentation of public media resources as well as an open discussion about strategies for incorporating media literacy in all classrooms.

Critical Enjoyment and Advocacy through Advertising

THERESA REDMOND, Appalachian State University

Media literacy has been criticized for contributing to social divides by spurring suspicion and doubt, rather than healthy skepticism. Danah Boyd's (2017) *Did Media Literacy Backfire?* condemns media literacy. Yet, active scholarly-teachers in the field understand the complexities of media literacy as a pedagogical approach for inquiry, as Renee Hobbs (2017) articulated in her response to Boyd. There is, undoubtedly, tension in how media literacy is enacted in classrooms— namely between authoritative approaches that generate distrust and empowering praxis that cultivates students' healthy inquiry. In this session, I share strategies for teachers seeking to balance instruction so students become independent thinkers and makers of media.

Creating Pathways for Inclusion: Critical Media Literacy, Visual Methodology, and Learning in Higher Education

THERESA REDMOND, MARTHA McCAUGHEY, JENNIFER LUETKEMEYER, JEWEL DAVIS, TEMPESTT ADAMS, Appalachian State University

In this session, our interdisciplinary research cluster will share ongoing work where we disarticulate and relocate our teaching and research by examining the spaces where critical media literacy and visual methodologies overlap. Our exploration of this overlap has been enacted through traditional scholarly inquiry approaches combined with art-based research methods, specifically visual journaling. In our cluster, we seek to broaden repertoires of praxis to promote creative, inclusive, and equitable learning cultures in higher education that incorporate digital and physical spaces and structures.

Whose News Literacy? Towards a Critical Approach

JANE REGAN, independent scholar

News literacy curricula and materials, like the ones offered by SUNY Stony Brook's Center for News Literacy, give educators a great head start in planning a course or module, but what if that head start takes students down a cul-de-sac? News and media literacy ought to encourage critical thinking about the entire news ecosystem, not just the mainstream media and "fake news" outliers. A critical approach allows students explore filter bubbles and confirmation bias as learn about the entire gamut of news media, consider subjects like the revolutionary origins of journalism and about the roots of "liberal" and "conservative" thinking.

Black Mirror-Mirror

JANE REGAN, independent scholar

As Jill Lepore recently noted, we are living in a “golden age of dystopian fiction.” But some of the fiction is not so fictional. For example, many Black Mirror episodes offer thought-provoking and accessible introductions to FOMO, trolls, tracking, social media hoaxes, big tech, selfie-obsession and so many other aspects of our screen-mediated, digitized lives and relationships. By pairing an episode with online readings and viewings from sources like Psychology Today, the BBC and other sources, featuring thinkers like Sherry Turkle, Nicolas Carr and Tim Wu, students – working individually or in teams – might realize that “the future” is now.

Undergraduate Digital Writing and Rhetoric in a Project Based Environment

FRANK ROMANELLI, University of Rhode Island and the Media Education Lab

Each year, I have participated in the Summer Institute in Digital Literacy in Providence RI as either a participant or a team leader. Each year I have brought tools, ideas, and concepts to my undergraduate course in digital writing and rhetoric. This past year, I brought the whole institute with me and recreated the framework of the week around the course in which I use the text, Create to Learn by Renee Hobbs. This session will show examples of student work, classroom activities, and assignments used in this project-based inquiry approach to an undergraduate class.

Can You Spot a Fake?

EMILY SHRIVER, Rochester Institute of Technology

Review of results of a survey that asks, can the average media consumer determine if a photojournalistic image has been manipulated, enhanced, or original when viewing them on their own devices. The definition for manipulated vs enhanced in this study is that manipulated images have content added, removed, or significantly changed, while enhanced images only have aesthetic changes.



Capturing Critical Thinking in Action: Using Screencasting as a Tool for Student Engagement and Report Back

SAMANTHA STANLEY, University of Hong Kong/ University of Rhode Island

Wouldn't it be great to see each of your students' thinking critically about the source of online information in real time? Screencasting programs make it possible! This presentation demonstrates how screencasting was used by students to share their experience critically evaluating the sources journalists use in news stories. We will also hear feedback from students about their experience using a new digital tool to complete an assignment that would typically be done using text. Participants of this hands-on session will walk away with customizable lesson plans and materials ranging from software to rubrics to worksheets.

Media Literacy Advocacy & Policy

PAM STEAGER, Senior Researcher, Media Education Lab

It seems that almost everyone these days understands the need for media literacy education for all ages, but getting there is another matter. Learn about the national, regional and local efforts to advance media literacy and how you can get involved, if you're not already. Share your efforts if you are!

The Black Panther & The Importance of Representation

RASHAWNA SYDNOR, independent scholar

Using one of the top 10 highest grossing films of our time, participants will explore the necessity of positive representation, the possibility for exploration of topics ranging from ancient civilizations to women in science, and the art of the revolution and community engagement. Marvel's Black Panther, which is cemented in the psyche of children and adults alike, for its artistry, sights, sounds and connection to history, will be unpacked from an academic lens allowing us to use this engaging popular medium to awaken the imagination and broaden the minds of your scholars.

Figuring Out Fake News: The War of the Worlds Broadcast and Primary Sources in the Classroom

MARISSA VASSARI AND MARINA LOMBARDO, Rockefeller Archive Center

An archivist and a teacher collaborated on a scaffolded multi-week archival project in a 5th grade classroom that targeted media literacy skills through the lens of the 1938 War of the Worlds broadcast. The lessons included a visit to the Rockefeller Archive Center, student-centered mixed media presentations, and primary source document analysis in small and large groups.

A Teach-In: How to Make Money with Content Creation

RENEE HOBBS, University of Rhode Island, Media Education Lab

Many people love to create content but many do not understand their many options for gaining revenue from their creative work. In this session, participants use the “teach in” format to share what they know about how to monetize their writing, images, video and other digital content. The program is designed to share knowledge and insights that build people’s confidence about the value of their creative work.

Building a Shared Professional Vision through Video Analysis

SUSAN ZOLL, Rhode Island College

Preservice educators engage in self-reflection cycles along with observation feedback to improve practice. But sometimes there can be a disconnect between a teacher candidate’s fragmented recollections of their teaching and a clinical supervisor’s observation field notes. The use of video can bridge this gap. This session will highlight a continuum of video analysis being piloted in two early literacy methods courses in an effort to create a shared professional vision of effective classroom instruction.

