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Editors' Note: SIMILE Progress Report

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Editors' Note: *SIMILE* Progress Report

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ABSTRACT

As *Studies in Media & Information Literacy Education (SIMILE)* enters its sixth year of publication, the co-editors have identified a number of issues to be addressed in the journal's development. This editors' note explores how the field of media and information literacy education has grown in importance. There continues to be a need for both theory-building and empirical research data, which would strengthen conceptualization. *SIMILE* needs to cultivate a global sense of significance about media and information literacy education issues across many disciplines.

As *Studies in Media & Information Literacy Education (SIMILE)* enters its sixth year of publication, the co-editors have identified a number of issues to be addressed in the journal's development. This editors' note explores how the field of media and information literacy education has grown in importance.

A 1998 *Journal of Communication* symposium focused on media literacy. The editor at the time, Alan Rubin, noted the debate over media literacy issues had been going on for several decades. Authors have defined media literacy in different ways that address "critical evaluation of messages" for information and understanding:

Media literacy, then, is about understanding the sources and technologies of communication, the codes that are used, the messages that are produced, and the selection, interpretation, and impact of those messages. (Rubin, 1998, p. 3).

Brown (1998) identified a number of theoretical concerns related to media literacy education:

- Media viewing involves a complex combination of cognitive and affective processes;
- Critical thinking about media may involve moralistic issues;
- And, judgments may involve appreciation of quality media selected from a much larger and ubiquitous range of media content. (pp. 45–48).

Christ and Potter (1998) focused on the speed at which individuals and cultures are being exposed to new media, and the pressure placed upon educators to help people understand messages: "Though the calls for media literacy are not new, what is new is the rise of relatively inexpensive media that allows students to produce their own works, the rapid transnational transmission of programming, and the concerted effort by several countries over the last 2 decades to develop national curricula" (p. 2). Christ and Potter suggested scholars need to address the complexity and dynamism of media literacy as a construct.

Media literacy as a field has tended to get bogged down in the problem of agreeing upon a basic definition. For our purposes, adding information literacy does not make the task any easier. What are media? What constitutes information? To what extent is literacy or literacy education similar or different in each context? There continues to be a need for both theory-building and empirical research data, which would strengthen conceptualization. *SIMILE* needs to foster a global sense of significance about media and information literacy education issues across many disciplines.

We would propose dividing conceptual issues of media and information literacy education into two key prongs: first, the K-12 concern of cultivating media and information literacy skills as a fundamental requirement of an elementary and secondary education; and second, life-long learning by adults, including university students, about the nature of global media corporations, framing of media messages, potential effects on children and adults, appreciation of quality, and application of this knowledge in the role of active citizenship.

Journal Annual Report

In 2005, *Studies in Media & Information Literacy Education (SIMILE)* published 12 refereed articles from 24 submissions, for an acceptance rate of 50%.

The following editorial board members assisted in reviewing manuscripts during the past 12 months: Charles Acland, Jonathan Adams, Frank Chorba, Lona Cobb, Jeremy Cohen, James Crook, Lynn Cunningham, John Dillon, Ross Eaman, Daradirek Ekachai, Sheryl Hamilton, Sheila Intner, Yasmin Jiwani, Bruce Johansen, Thomas Johnson, James Kelly, Robert Kubey, Pepi Leistyna, Carolyn Lin, Greg Lisby, Margaret Mackey, Ann Marie Major, Michael McCauley, Sally McMillan, Ali Mohamed, Carol Pardun, John Pavlik, Dan Peak, Donna Potts, Angela Powers, Nancy Thomas, and Kyu Ho Youm.

Additionally, the following scholars in the University of Nebraska at Omaha School of Communication assisted in reviewing manuscripts: Chris Allen, Hollis Glaser, Marshall Prisbell, Hugh Reilly, and Michael Sherer.

The wide range of manuscripts reviewed during the past year indicates an active scholarly interest in the field of media and information literacy education. Additional external proof of this interest comes from the LSU Manship School of Mass Communication. The first-ever endowed chair in media literacy has been established in order to improve American understanding of “how to distinguish responsible journalism and advertising,” according to Dean John Maxwell Hamilton. “A vigorous media helps inform citizens of current issues and governmental policies, but it is essential that the public knows how to interpret what they read, see or hear in the news.”

Research in media and information literacy cuts across many disciplines and continents. We are encouraged by the quality and quantity of submissions to *SIMILE*. We look forward to seeing your work in the coming year.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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