

2-2009

Editors' Note: Defining Media and Information Literacy Amid Change

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Recommended Citation

Lipschultz, Jeremy Harris and Hilt, Michael L., "Editors' Note: Defining Media and Information Literacy Amid Change" (2009).
Communication Faculty Publications. 34.

<https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/commfacpub/34>

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Editors' Note: Defining Media and Information Literacy Amid Change

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Abstract

Recent articles in *Studies in Media & Information Literacy Education (SIMILE)* highlight definitional challenges and opportunities.

In the ninth year of *SIMILE*, the editors see an exciting trend toward critically examining the foundations of our relatively young field. In our November 2008 issue, for example, Paul Mihailidis addressed the problem of location for media literacy within the academy. In a sense, our greatest strength and limitation is a lack of boundaries about what constitutes media and information literacy. We are still debating: the language to use, the implications of K-12 versus higher education, the need for assessment and outcome measures, as well as what we mean by media and information literacy.

Potter (2005) reminds us that the base question is whether or not individuals are “media literate” (p. vii). He goes on to use the psychological concept of automaticity which “is a state where our minds operate without any conscious effort from us” (p. 5). So, from a cognitive perspective, the definition of media literacy ultimately is about “a set of perspectives that we actively use to expose ourselves to the media to interpret the meaning of messages we encounter” (p. 22).

For Tobias, also found in our November 2008 issue, media and information literacy is broader and about culture and pedagogies. Specifically, a critical approach sees “media literacy as a means to disrupt, intervene, and transform the social hierarchies, political and economic structures that currently shape media” (p. 1). Critical media literacy theoretically lies at the center of concepts such as protection, intervention, art/aesthetics, critical analysis, and transformation. Tobias argues that these ideas co-exist and interact with one another.

Finally, Gleason's November 2008 analysis of landscape photography stretches media and information literacy boundaries further into the area of visual communication. This is increasingly important because traditional social landscapes are being transformed by virtual landscapes presented in all forms of media – television, computers, games and mobile devices. This dynamic environment is helping drive our community of scholars toward new insights. For journals such as *SIMILE*, as well as the relatively new *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, there is an interest in publishing research on how new media technologies assist or inhibit individual users and educators. The editors call for an examination of the role of media and information literacy in promoting active engagement with new technologies.

Journal Annual Report

In 2008, *Studies in Media & Information Literacy Education (SIMILE)* published 11 refereed articles from 14 submissions, for an acceptance rate of 79%. The number of submissions was down from the previous year. This decline was due, in part, to our transition to the MetaPress database. Although the lower number of submissions was disappointing, the quality of published articles remained high. This was due to *SIMILE* reviewers providing meaningful and constructive criticism, and published authors responding by making important revisions prior to publication. *SIMILE* continued to cultivate a learning community. The process, as well as author awareness about *SIMILE*, produced an increasing number of articles focused on building media and information literacy theories. Our hope is that through continued calls for papers and growing knowledge about the journal, 2009 will bring new interest in media and information literacy.

As a matter of fact, we just received word that *SIMILE* is now listed on The Informed Librarian Online at www.informedlibrarian.com. Each issue will be linked from that site. Titles will also be indexed in the ILOSearch database.

This website serves thousands of librarians around the world with 312 titles and more than 89,000 documents indexed.

The following editorial board members assisted in reviewing manuscripts during the past 12 months: Jonathan Adams, Frank Chorba, Lynn Cunningham, John Dillon, Eliza Dresang, Daradirek Ekachai, Sheryl Hamilton, Yasmin Jiwani, Bruce Johansen, Colin Lankshear, Pepi Leistyana, Greg Lisby, Ann Marie Major, Ali Mohamed, John Pavlik and Kyu Ho Youm.

Additionally, the following scholars in the University of Nebraska at Omaha School of Communication assisted in reviewing manuscripts: Chris Allen, Teresa Lamsam, Lynnette Leonard, Dave Ogden, Barb Pickering and Michael Sherer.

COLUMBIA ONLINE CITATION: HUMANITIES STYLE

Lipschultz, Jeremy, & Hilt, Michael. "Editors' Note: Defining Media and Information Literacy Amid Change." *Studies in Media & Information Literacy Education* 9.1 (2009). <http://www.utpress.utoronto.ca/journal/ejournals/simile> (insert access date here).

COLUMBIA ONLINE CITATION: SCIENTIFIC STYLE

Lipschultz, J. H., & Hilt, M. L. (2009). Editors' Note: Defining Media and Information Literacy Amid Change. *Studies in Media & Information Literacy Education*, 9(1). <http://www.utpress.utoronto.ca/journal/ejournals/simile> (insert access date here).

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