Media Literacy in a Digital Information Age

“The Knight Commission recognized that people need tools, skills and understanding to use information effectively, and that successful participation in the digital age entails two kinds of skills: digital literacy and media literacy. Digital literacy means learning how to work the information and communication technologies in a networked environment, as well as understanding the social, cultural and ethical issues that go along with the use of these technologies. Media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, reflect upon, and act with the information produced that media disseminate.”

These literacy skills focus on helping young people, in particular, to not only become more careful and critical consumers of media messages and effective users of changing technologies so they can make more informed choices about their health, purchases, interpersonal relationships, and values, but also to become creative producers of media to more effectively communicate their thinking, ideas, and priorities. Media literacy programs in school, health, and community groups help young people to examine media messages about tobacco, alcohol and other drugs, nutrition, physical activity, relationships, sexuality, and violence. Many schools, agencies, and community organizations are integrating media literacy content and strategies into their curricula and prevention programs to help counteract the pervasive and often negative influence of the mass media and to provide opportunities for young people to express themselves and communicate through their own production of media in a positive manner. Both the IRA and NCTE have expanded the guidelines for developing a literate person to include viewing and visually representing as two additional key literacy skills to the traditional basics of reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Topics Include:

- What is Media/Digital Literacy? A Primer for Teachers, Parents, and the Public
- Media and its Role in Today’s Politics
- Powerful Media Images of Females and Males: Implications for Our Youth
- Media Literacy Research—What it Shows, What it Doesn’t, and What is Needed!
- Media-Related Issues in Health and Community Services
- The Role of Social Media in the Lives of Young People
- Media Production—The Attractive Challenge for Technologically-Savvy Youth
- What We Can Learn from Local and Regional Media Literacy Programs
- Popular Culture as Reflected in Music, Art, and Theater
- Helping Students Understand Their Pop Culture Choices through the Mass Media
- The Mass Media and Privacy
- Teachers Discover the Power of Media Education in Their Curriculum
- Media Representations of Alcoholism and Tobacco Use
- Using Media Literacy to Meet Core Curriculum Standards
- Media Literacy and Minorities, the Underrepresented, and Special Interest Groups
- Violence and Sex in Television, Video Games, and Film: Images that Sell—What?
- Let’s Get Specific: Media Literacy Classroom Activities that Work!
- Media Literacy and Developing Critical Thinking Skills—A Natural for Today’s School Curriculum
- Integrating Digital/Media Literacy in Teacher Education Programs
- International Perspectives on Digital/Media Literacy

Comments from Past Participants

“A terrific, thought-provoking overview of media literacy for beginners as well as extension ideas for those experienced in the field.”

“Really great conference and I was glad to see such a diverse group of people from various professions.”

“Excellent workshops, wonderful spirit from beginning to end.”

The Neag School of Education, in conjunction with the National Action Coalition for Media Education and the National Association for Media Literacy Education, present:

Media Literacy in a Digital Information Age

University of Connecticut • Rome Commons Ballroom

Friday, April 19th, 2013
Why is Media Literacy Important Today?  
Young people are bombarded continuously with mass media messages including over 1,500 advertisements every day, from television, radio, movies, video/computer games, Internet, music DVDs, billboards, newspapers, magazines, clothing, packaging and marketing materials. Increasingly, recent developments in technology have added blogs, YouTube, Myspace, Facebook, and cell phone pictures to the list. Many of the messages include much violent and sexual content that is usually attractive to young people as they are largely the intended target audience! Such daily exposure to the many forms of the mass media has a tremendous impact upon thinking, values, behaviors, and actions. Concern among parents, teachers, pediatricians, counselors, religious leaders, and health care and juvenile justice workers has clearly pointed to a need for open discussion, the sharing of experiences and concerns, and the planning of strategies to cope with the huge, and often negative, impact of the mass media upon our young people. Although much media content is negative, there are many important positives that need to be explored, not the least of which is the potential for today’s technologically focused young people to effectively and creatively communicate through the many media forms that are so attractive to them.

Technology is a predominant part of young people’s lives. Our 11th annual conference focuses on understanding and closely examining the key relationship between today’s digital media and our expanding media literacy efforts.

Program Schedule—Friday, April 19

8:00–8:45 Registration, Continental Breakfast
8:45–9:00 Welcome, Introductory Remarks, Conference Details
9:00–10:00 Opening Keynote: Cyndy Scheibe, “Embracing Media Literacy Education: The Challenge and the Promise”
10:00–11:00 Coffee Break
Exhibits open 10:00–5:00
10:15–11:15 Session I Workshops (Check online for latest details)
11:25–12:25 Session II Workshops
12:25–1:10 Buffet Lunch and Exhibits
1:10–2:10 Keynote: Chris Sperry, “The Role and Relevance of Media Literacy in K-12 Education”
2:15–3:15 Session III Workshops
3:15–3:25 Break, Refreshments
3:25–4:25 Session IV International Panel Presentation and Discussion
4:30–5:30 Summary Panel Discussion: “Determining Media Literacy Priorities and Strategies in the Expanding Digital Media Age”
5:10–6:00 Social Hour