CONNECT!ONS Med!aLit moments

| Consortium for Media Literacy | Volume No. 112 | June 2019 |

Leadership Letter for Global MIL

Media Literacy in Policy: An Expanding Arena

Media literacy has long had a role in policy: in the early 2000's, for example, OfCom established an office for media literacy; the U.S. Federal Communications Commissions (FCC) issued a call for information on media literacy in relationship to online security; and Canada has called for media literacy as part of its language arts curricula for several decades now. But though these policy initiatives are noteworthy, they are also sporadic and not supported systemically, which ultimately has meant less implementation and integration for media literacy into the fabric of everyday governance and life.

Today, media literacy has been identified as a strategic defense priority in Europe, and the U.S. has also recognized media literacy as a strategic defense priority in its foreign affairs. This is a significant and far-reaching development, because at last, media literacy is seen as both important and as urgent, and significant resources are being deployed to address media literacy and how to expand capacity and outreach for it. Defense is an imperative that cannot be denied, and it calls for mobilization throughout civil society, to have resilient populations capable of addressing media and disinformation, and of making the wise choices possible necessary for democracy.

This defense priority provides unprecedented opportunities for media literacy globally. At last, governments are seriously exploring what media literacy is, what practices are prevalent, how effective those practices are, and what can be done to increase media literacy in populations everywhere. At the same time, there is a need for caution in expanding media literacy: media literacy should not be used for ideological or partisan purposes; it should instead help people gain capacity to identify the biases and purposes behind media messages, and to judge for themselves, in accordance with their lifestyles, values and points of view. Media literacy is only as democratic as the teaching and learning of the discipline prescribes; it is a process that encourages and rests on inquiry and skepticism, and those who have the responsibility to teach media literacy must be trained to teach it responsibly. Furthermore, media literacy is not just about social media or technology use and production; it is more about education than it is about the media, although media is the global symbolic system that is the object of study in media literacy. And finally, media literacy is not just about misinformation and disinformation that may or may not be present in news content; media literacy frameworks for inquiry may be applied to any subject, anywhere, anytime – whether those subjects are elections or vaccines, media literacy provides process skills for seeking truth and for making decisions, which is a never-ending quest.

In this issue of Connections, we invite you to explore two cases of governments encouraging media literacy within their countries, Estonia and Sweden. Although the circumstances in each country differ, the process skills of media literacy are constants which citizens can use to address the challenges and opportunities of their day. The news and the context in which news and media are generated are local; media literacy skills and processes may be applied globally. Through encouraging and strengthening media literacy in civil society, governments hope and expect that citizens will be more

resilient and better equipped to access, analyze, evaluate, create and participate with the media that permeates their lives – the media that citizens themselves are now generating and sharing across boundaries of language, culture and geography. These governmental priorities represent a new era for media literacy: an era in which media literacy is seen as an integral part of government functions in supporting educated and capable citizens, prepared to act in their own self interest, and that of their communities, as democratic citizens.

Interview with Siim Kulpas

Siim Kumpas has served as a Strategic Communication Adviser at the Government Office of Estonia since early 2018, focusing on building Estonia's resilience to foreign information attacks. In 2015–2018, he worked in the Ministry of the Interior as a Communication Adviser, covering topics from crisis management and border security to the Estonian Presidency of the EU Council in 2017. Prior to that, he served as a Communication Specialist in Foundation Innove. He received his Master's Degree in Communication Management from the University of Tartu in 2013.

Siim Kumpas (SK): In 2007, we had the infamous Bronze Night riots in Tallinn, when the government decided to move a Soviet statue from the city center to a bit more quiet location. In addition to what happened offline in the streets, this was the first time when another country – Estonia – was being targeted in the cyber field by another country – Russia – on this scale. This set the scene; whenever you hear cyber security experts talking about state sponsored cyber attacks, they often bring up this example.

In addition to the cyber side, there was of course the psychological and strategic communication side of the attacks. It was after those events that the government decided that this is a topic that has to be dealt with on the government level, and they hired a few strategic communication advisers to work on this at the Government Office. For the next 10 years, up until 2017, strategic communication was coordinated by one or two people at the government office. At that time, most of this work wasn't public. Back then, we referred to this as psychological defense.

As you can probably imagine, you can only do so much with one or two people. You can coordinate on a basic level between relevant ministries and agencies and conduct some projects, but that's pretty much it. But then in the end of 2017, our government decided to allocate extra funding to create a dedicated strategic communication team. This team started last March. By now, there are six of us, but by August this year, there will be nine of us in the unit. At the Government Office, the scope strategic communication is limited to the field of defense and security. We have two big goals – bolstering our society's and allies' support to Estonia's defense policies and raising the resilience to foreign information attacks. Our work doesn't only focus on the military side of defense, there is also a softer side to it. Just to bring a few examples of the attitudes we see relevant from the point of view of national security: support to NATO and EU membership; willingness to participate in voluntary work (i.e. becoming a volunteer policeman or a rescuer); trust in democratic institutions; feeling of closeness to the state. So, boosting different attitudes in that field, that's one side, and the other side is building resilience to foreign information attacks. That's where I come in. That's where media literacy comes in.

In building the overall resilience of our society to hostile information attacks – and I'm limiting this to a foreign information attacks – our work can be divided to four pillars.

Firstly, raising the awareness of our people, but also public institutions and companies, about the field of information attacks and media literacy; and build resilience. Secondly, monitoring the information sphere in order to create situational awareness and detect possible information attacks. Thirdly, reacting to the attacks, if necessary, and fourthly cooperating on an international level. When I joined the team, I had no idea how big of an issue disinformation is. It quickly became clear that building resilience to information attacks is a separate policy field. Media literacy has been a policy field for quite a time now in the EU, but it is seen as more urgent now.

Now coming to the first point I mentioned, building awareness and resilience. There I see media literacy and critical thinking more generally as basically one of the two proactive ways we can go about it. The second possible option, that is equally important, is supporting a free and independent media landscape.

I see those two areas as the only credible ways to do something about information attacks before they happen, and that's how I ended up dealing with media literacy even though I didn't expect to on my first day here at this office.

Center for Media Literacy (CML): You've now had time in your job to analyze the situation and how you see the needs. It seems that we have few tools to be proactive in terms of supporting democratic decision making and also helping build that awareness and resilience, and media literacy is one of those tools. How do you see the role of your office to support these goals?

SK: Currently in Estonia, there're quite a few players who are looking at media literacy from very different angles. For starters, we have the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture. Then we have our universities who train teachers and our libraries who work on information literacy. We have movie institutes and a movie museum, and some NGO's and teachers who are really active in media literacy… just today we had a big working group meeting; this group was just established in the last year.

In the past, everybody was pursuing their own path, and that was that. It made so much sense to bring everyone all together. So, this is something I've been slowly working on here. This has been going on in several countries for years or even decades, but in Estonia, this kind of cooperation in media literacy is pretty novel. This year in March we celebrated Estonia's first Media Literacy Week. It was a part of the EU's initiative set out in the Action Plan against Disinformation that the EU Commission and External Action Service put out last December.There they had 10 concrete steps describing how we can go about addressing disinformation on EU level, and one of them was initiating an EU wide Media Literacy Week.

People tend to get a bit allergic when you say that you need a formal working group or a policy for something, so we've taken a pragmatic approach, building partnerships by doing joint projects. That helps to build momentum, to get the habits in place that we come together every quarter, a few times a year, whatever the regularities, but we come

together, we speak, we exchange ideas, we do things together. So, I think when we have that rhythm in place, it's much easier to build something more formal and long-term on that.

CML: What's the role of your office in this work?

SK: Our office has a dual role in this – we coordinate the strategic communication efforts of Estonian ministries and agencies, but we conduct hands-on projects as well. Our office should probably not be central for media literacy work, but it is currently, and will be in the future, one of the main partners in this on the government level. I'm not the right person to say whether the Ministry of Education is the perfect place for this or Ministry of Culture, or an independent media agency, but somebody needs to own it, somebody needs to lead work on this. This is something we are yet to decide in Estonia. Currently there isn't a single ministry or institution whose portfolio is as wide as needed in order to cover the full spectrum of media literacy. Hence the approach of moving forward by doing, by practical steps; to not get tangled in political arguments.

CML: You're basically going through a change management process, where media literacy is seen as a priority. It certainly is part of your portfolio with defense and is essential. We know that when it comes down to it, defense underpins every government function since it's such an essential role of government.
Yet if everybody owns it, nobody owns it. It's the kind of topic that everybody needs to have some input into because it is important in so many different arenas. One thought is that in a sense, media literacy is a 21st century kind of challenge for governments in that governments are organized traditionally according to functional areas, but media literacy is really a topic that spans different functions and underpins different functions. So in a way, you need that networking model that applies to the Internet.

SK: I absolutely agree. For example, at today's meeting with many different stakeholders, we started by discussing practical ideas regarding next year's Media Literacy Week, and we ended up talking – among other things – about child safety online, freedom of speech, cyber hygiene, audio visual literacy et cetera. There are just so many sides to media literacy.

CML: Could you provide some perspective about what you're seeing with neighboring countries, or how media literacy fits into the defense community?

SK: I will focus more on strategic communication's role in defense and security.In the European Union, work in addressing disinformation – and enhancing media literacy as a part of it – really picked up last spring. One of the first major steps by the EU was to put out communication on disinformation, a paper that describes the problem and offers some initial solutions to it.
From there on, the EU picked up speed; for example, the latest addition to address disinformation on the EU level is something called the Rapid Alert System, which was created this March ahead of the European Parliament elections, exactly in order for countries to have a better way to exchange information about information attacks against the EU and our democratic processes.

When we talk about information attacks, you can either react or be proactive. There have been quite a lot of talks on the EU level about reacting: whether we should, for example, debunk, whether we should fact check, whether we should attribute information attacks to the attacker. For some time, the weight was on that side – the side of reacting, I would say – but more and more, I see talks on media literacy and on supporting free and independent media. So, as of last year, no serious discussion about addressing the dark side of disinformation passes without mentioning media literacy, without mentioning critical thinking, without mentioning the importance of free, professional, and independent media.

CML: Everyday citizens can be empowered to act if they acquire some of the critical thinking skills that media literacy offers, in an environment fosters a free media. That's a crucial message in terms of giving people hope.

SK: Media literacy doesn't solve everything. Unfortunately, we see that intelligent and well educated people fall for very simple psychological tricks – that's the way the human mind works. People will never become fully rational beings; we're emotional as well and that makes us vulnerable but human at the same time. But media literacy – having the tools and methods to think critically, to analyze, to ask questions, that's the basis of it all. We need to have that in place. When we don't have that, it doesn't make much sense to talk about any further steps.

CML: Yes, media literacy is foundational. It's like dental hygiene. You're never going to prevent cavities 100%, but certainly if you brush your teeth every day, you increase your chances of avoiding the cavities. Media literacy provides risk management – we're trying to increase people's capacity for increasing the chances of making better decisions.

SK: Yes. When we compare means of reacting to something and means of being proactive, then the reactive means are often politically charged to some extent. But being proactive doesn't necessarily have to be. Building resilience is something everybody agrees with. When we also look at this from a liberal and democratic point of view, then again, when you react to something, it's much more easier to overstep some boundaries, either knowingly or unknowingly, that we actually hold dear. But when building resilience to something, it's virtually impossible to go against the values we hold in such high regard.

CML: To a great extent, this represents the difference between control and censorship and empowerment and choices. The democratic faith, of course, is in the wisdom of the people and in a democratic approach, and also having faith in education as the means through which to help people be empowered to make good decisions. So, it's all kind of mixed in there, but at the same time, there's a big difference between the proactive and the reactive, and I appreciate what you're saying about how the proactive is nonpartisan. It's something that people can definitely get behind regardless of the political spectrum.

SK: It's becoming more and more important, given the changes on the political field in most democratic countries.

CML: It is easy to lose the freedoms and lose those abilities to choose. On the one hand, the technology unleashes a lot of possibilities for freedom of expression, and then voice. On the other hand, it also can foster a lot more censorship and a lot more shutting down of voices, so it's a choice on which way do democratic societies want to go.

SK: When you look at the changes that social media has brought about, then I can imagine how maybe 10 years, 15 years ago, people did not see media literacy as a high priority issue, because it might've seemed as a niche thing. But now, with everything that has happened since Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, Russia's meddling in the 2016 US presidential elections and other events in Europe, people see how social media affects each and every one of us and support the need for media literacy.
The era of technological optimism is being substituted with technological realism or even pessimism as more and more people are better aware about the downsides of technology. I think we've reached a golden era for people who work on media literacy, because it's easy to convince people why this topic is relevant, and it's very hard for anybody to seriously argue against the importance of media literacy and critical thinking in these days.

TJ: It's a time of growth and opportunity for the media literacy field. It also is, in a sense, a little bit of a dangerous time because how is media literacy being defined? How is it being used? We have to be careful not to over-promise. It's not the magic bullet, but it is a very important tool. How would you advise people on that cautionary side of how media literacy fits, and what we need to really think about in order to be sure to realize the promise of media literacy without overstepping?

SK: Well, two things pop into my mind. One is rhetorics of course, the way we talk about it. It's crucial to not oversell media literacy. I like to call it a matter of hygiene, and everybody understands this, that basic hygiene is something elementary and it doesn't solve all the problems, but removes quite a lot of risks. With media literacy, I think it should be similar. Quite a lot of media literacy work has been put on hold for too long, and the foundation for media literacy in civil society is missing. Now we're just filling the gaps that should have been filled earlier.
Secondly, finding the balance between just raising awareness and implementing, putting in place long term policies. Let's take the Media Literacy Week for example. It's a good idea, and I think it's something that definitely helps the field move forward, but this isn't an end in itself. It's just a way to draw attention to the topic, but the work itself has to be continuous. What I'm trying to say is, let's have less emphasis on gimmicks and more emphasis on actual long term work in media literacy.

Interview with Carl Heath

Carl Heath *is the Vice President of Education at RISE – Research Institutes of Sweden, and the Special Counsel for the Protection of Democratic Dialogue, charged by the Swedish Government to lead a national mission to strengthen media and information literacy in Sweden. At RISE, he leads RISE applied research in education, and also leads the RISE mission to be a leading actor in professional education. Prior to his current work, he worked in research and development projects regarding ICT, interaction design, design thinking, learning and culture. He has also conducted design work or other project activities together with a large range of actors, from government institutions and ministries to Disney Imagineering, H&M, Commission of the European Union, Nordic Council of Ministers. Before working at RISE he was the founder of GR Experiential Learning (now a part of The GR Pedagogical Centre). He studied at the University of Gothenburg, where he combined work in political science, social science, pedagogy and ICT.* www.carlheath.se

Center for Media Literacy (CML): Please tell us about your involvement in media and information literacy.

Carl Heath (CH): I have two vocations in Sweden. One is my day-to-day job as the director or Vice president President of Education at Swedish Research Institutes, RISE – Research Institutes of Sweden. There, my role is to work with educational issues in applied research. We do applied research work within the context of education, but we are also an education provider in the applied research field. The research institutes in Sweden have about 2,700 researchers and one of the things I do is to see how we can tap that knowledge in education-at-large in Sweden. Working with education in media and working with digitalization of education, I've found that media and information literacy is quite an important part of the applied research that we are doing in the education field.

Then, as of August 2018, I was appointed by the government in Sweden to be the special counsel for the Protection of Democratic Dialogue, which is a newly-formed function with the aim of leading a national initiative on media and information literacy in Sweden for the population at large. In that initiative, we are also targeting special interest groups, such as older adults. That work started out in the middle of autumn 2018 and it is going to run up until the autumn of 2020. That's a large part of my work at the moment, setting up and organizing this national initiative.

CML: Having media and information literacy recognized at the policy level and being able to start embedding those processes in various government agencies and functions is a dream come true for the MIL field. We've all been working towards that

goal for many years. This initiative is fairly new and also cross disciplinary; it is an ideal example of what we want to see happen. What are some other initiatives in MIL that are taking place in Sweden?

CH: We have an agency that is the Swedish media agency, which has worked with MIL for a long time; they've been a part of the UNESCO context, and their primary focus is young people. Now, their work has received increased recognition by the government, and they are strengthening their offerings in organizing and addressing issues in the MIL space.

That work parallels the national initiative on the Protection of Democratic Dialogue that I am leading. There's also another government initiative targeting schools. About two years ago, we introduced reformed curricula where we have strengthened offerings in digital competence for Swedish students in the primary end of the secondary school system. We've introduced programming from age seven, with the first grade program in the mandatory in all schools, starting this last autumn, 2018.

We've also strengthened the work on understanding digital literacy in the context of social sciences in both primary and secondary school. There's a set number of different initiatives and the one that I'm leading is not so much targeting the other agencies or the work that the government does, as much as it is focused on outreach work, looking towards the broad population. We are identifying what areas of the population are best to focus on, and whether we need to set a clear focus on gearing resources for MIL to specific demographics.

What kinds of methods and tools are best to reach out? What are some examples of these methods and tools used both internationally and in Sweden? How can we use these materials for these various target groups?

We're just now putting together the basic workflow of how this project is supposed to be executed. Then in a month or so, we're starting a tour around Sweden, where we're putting our feet down in different cities where we are going to meet up with the local leaders and various kinds of interest groups – education and libraries and the elderly environments and civil societies, for example – to find and reach a broader set of the population that we and others are working with. Our goal is to find out how we can give these groups and individuals both tools and the means of understanding media and information literacy in a day-to-day, average life.

Having MIL skills today is a necessity in order to understand what goes on around us in our world. Without those primary digital and media skills, the risk is that some people are left out of quite large discussions in society, and it becomes a clear issue for encouraging democratic dialogue. We're starting with a tour in a month or so, and we're going to be on the road until the autumn of 2020.

Tracking these needs is also a moving target, because as digital tools change over time, the set of skills that we need to be informed and understand our surrounding world become ever-shifting. That's an issue that we have to take into consideration when working with these things – we can make an agenda for now, but it's a moving target that will change continuously.

CML: How does this moving target apply to the audience, which is also a moving target as people move through ages and stages?

CH: In Sweden today, we have about 90% of our population on the internet, and these people all have knowledge about day-to-day work on the internet, but we still have about a million of our population who are not there. Very many of them are above the age of 77, and we have an increasing elderly population. Obviously, if you want to be a part of the modern society, it is an issue that if you're not in tuned or have knowledge about a digital context around you, it's really hard to understand the media world of today. That age group is a really important group to look into and work with.

CML: There's been some research in the US recently on usage of social media and one of the findings was that, it's older adults who tend to share the most online information that isn't accurate.

CH: We do not have data for Sweden, but that said it seems likely that we have a similar trend in Sweden, where an elderly group seems can to be a bit overrepresented when it comes to disinformation spreading. The same goes with obviously other demographics, such as what sort of educational background you have, for example.

CML: What are some of the observations and learnings that you've had as you've work with educating diverse audiences?

CH: Finding a narrative around what you're educating about, that correlates with the target group's interest and context, makes education much easier. For example, when we work with different groups, we try to work with examples, and we work with cases and pieces of information that the group can relate to in their day-to-day lives. Even though we might use the same technology or the same methodology, we might change the content from one situation to the other for that subject matter to be engaging and relevant for that group.

Another situation is about where you are when you are educating and how long a time with the group that you have. If you meet the group in a physical room and have the chance to do a workshop, or if it's a group that we only meet over the Internet, we use different types digital tools. Examining these sorts of situations, and seeing how we can best educate using digital tools, is one of the starting points of our local research. One powerful way of using MIL in teaching and learning is trying to find narratives and ways of speaking and addressing issues that stem from the persons we are teaching themselves.

We have, for example, some methodology where we work with stories that are generated by the target group that we are working with. We started out with asking people to tell us, for example, a situation when they have felt the apathy or disorientation or something regarding media in their day-to-day life and somebody might say, start telling a story about a grandmother who starts sending links that are really out there and inaccurate. If this was your grandmother, what would you

do? What are you and others supposed to do about this in their ordinary world and situation?

Or another example might be to start telling a story about issues regarding complexities, about different groups reading very different information and drawing very different conclusions about a situation that appears. If you are on social media and engaged in civic discourse today, you meet these kinds of MIL situations in your day to day life regularly. Using these examples as a vessel and a tool for exploring and examining is a way to engage people in the discussion – so what does this mean for the individual, for society? What tools can we use to counteract these situations or understand more about them? What can you do on the individual level, and what could we do on a systems level?

Those kinds of questions are much easier to talk about when having the audience express their own story in their own context. It usually becomes very powerful sharing situations. I just had one such situation with a group of librarians some days ago, that resulted in a very heated and engaged discussion about the role of the library in a modern society – when media and information literacy not only happens to be about content, but also very normal and ordinary things, such as how do I use my mobile phone to really know if this a piece of information that comes from the right place or not? There are all these kinds of ways of working, but that's one core example of what we do.

Also, there are many good actors both in Sweden and abroad who do an excellent job designing methods and tools in MIL, so we try to aggregate this information and put it into a structure, to provide other resources while we're out on tour. This gives people an idea of possibilities of using various tools and technologies, so that we can enable others to use that others have and built already.

CML: What do you think is important to your success in the field, as you conduct your needs analysis?

CH: I have this basic thought that as humans, we are provided with one mouth and two ears – listening twice as much as we speak is usually quite a good thing when it comes to understanding and spreading and sharing information. One of the themes of our work is that if we really want a dialogue, we have to step up to listen, and act in ways that really enable dialogue, with all kinds of actors.

That is a complexity in and of itself, but it's really important because otherwise we would only provide information, but we wouldn't actually know if it's useful, if it lands well, or if it's the right approach. It's an iterative process that we're working with, where we will change things over and over again as we understand more about what happens with the people, and when the world shifts and changes around us.

CML: Yes. I think that's one of the really strong characteristics of MIL education today, that education is recognized as an iterative process with different audiences, with different people having different needs, with different purposes. It sounds like you're designing that right into the program that you're going to be pursuing.

CH: Yes. It's also the case that MIL has evolved quite a bit over time. If we look towards the MIL ecosystem that UNESCO has provided, we can see all kinds of various media and information literacies. Today, for example, we can see that there are education institutions are lacking competence themselves when it comes to understanding some certain aspects of media and information that you receive that quite frankly, civic society and other actors are very much more well equipped to, to work with, such as, games and media literacy.

This past autumn, when a new game by Ubisoft was a released, Assassin's Creed Odyssey, we now have millions of people who understand Greek mythology, not through the Iliad or the Odyssey, but through a computer game. Obviously, how that computer game portrays a Greek mythology becomes an important part of understanding media and information literacy today. Where did you get that kind of information from? What does it mean? Is it put into a larger context, etc?

Obviously, if I don't even know that that game exists, and addresses Greek mythology, then I won't understand that the game is much stronger than literature today in informing quite a large audience. If education institutions aren't informed about the media world and its impact on learning, then these institutions will have a hard time actually understanding the world around themselves. As media shifts in and of itself, we need to also look towards our institutions to see how are they empowered, how are they structured to actually meet the needs of media and information literacy in a broader population today.

CML: It's amazing all the different kinds of learnings that there are embedded in these games, and it's important for us to understand that.

CH: It's interesting to me because we have a different set of values towards different kinds of media. We value film and picture media as to be more important in our society than gaming, for example. Most likely because media around games is a much newer thing, but as we can see research start emerging around, for example, how people understand the world through understanding games. We can start to see this narrative shift but it's quite a long way away to see that we have both research systems and systems within our cultural frameworks that could address for instance, games to the same extent that you would relate to literacy in other domains.

CML: Exactly, and of course, millions of people are involved in these games. It was James Paul Gee, who a number of years ago wrote a book what video games have to teach us about learning and literacy. I wish that were a much more widely read book.

CH: Yes, and that research has really sort of grown and matured a lot since Gee's book was published. There are so many findings that I can only agree that it's a field that should be addressed more. It's just the same with other fields, such as MIL around algorithms and algorithmic understanding, and social media. Not only understanding how a text is written, but why did I receive the text to start with? Who was the designer of why I received this text or picture or whatnot? Why would somebody want me to see

this? How are the algorithmic frameworks around the information diet that I received set up? What are the power structures behind that?

That's a totally different field and gaming, but it's an example of another field which is quite new. We have a lot of things that we need to know, and we're most likely just in the beginning of a quite evolving research agenda. How a civic and public debate and discussion are actually carried out, given that our public speech today very often is mediated through algorithms designed not for public domain, but for example, for providing ads.

CML: To have informed opinions, we have an obligation to start understanding what the dynamics are here: What are the implications, what does it mean for the power structure?

CH: Yes, and here we come into a really interesting situation because up until only a couple of years ago, basically 10 or 15 years ago, it was hard to separate data from a physical entity. Most of our laws and regulations today are designed in such a way that they are designed from the viewpoint that you can separate data from the medium. Given where we are in a data-driven digital society, this is obviously something very different today, where a piece of information can be copied one million times without any friction at all.

Such seemingly small things are a very large thing when it comes to, for example, MIL and law, because we have regulations and law that's very old when it comes to freedom of speech and freedom of assembly. We need to re-address basic human rights as we go into this more data driven society. We need to start asking again the basic questions: what am I as a person? Am I more than me? Who owns the information that is produced as a consequence of my living in the world today? Is that something that we should take for granted, that it's just like it was, or should we sort of look upon this in a different way today?

CML: Yes, in the past, we were looking at a totally different information environment; now, the digital world really hasn't addressed the notion of property rights. Property rights been addressed in the physical world, where property is physical (such as in real estate) We have no "Magna Carta" to help define property rights in the digital world.

CH: There is a discrepancy because we basically haven't valued our own data, and it's hard for individuals to see the value of their own data. We live in a world where many services are perceived to be free – such as Google and Facebook and all kinds of tools that we use on a day-to-day basis. Obviously, they aren't free because we provide value not through money, but through the data that we provide. How much that value actually is, and who owns that data, and the regulations and structures surrounding that data are really fascinating. There are some initiatives that have just started to emerge. One example is of course Tim Berners Lee, who was one of the great founders of the Worldwide Web, who today says that he is sort of sad that he was a bit wrong when he designed the web 30 years ago.

Now, he's looking towards how to reform or reframe how we perceive the internet through a new platform that he's working on together with MIT called Solid. There's a bunch of such initiatives, where the foundations of the internet are looked upon with new eyes as a consequence of where the internet has evolved to today. Basically, society hasn't addressed these issues around who owns data, where data is accumulated, at what cost, and to whose benefit.

CML: Yes, and there are people like George Gilder, who is predicting life after Google.

CH: Yes. We're starting to see the emergence of a growing internationalization of the Chinese digital market with such companies as Bite Down. It was valued just above Uber today, at $75 billion. It provides the social media service Tik Tok, that is really valuable for the young generation. There's a bunch of other examples of where the old Chinese notion of "made in China" is starting to shift into "created by or designed in China."

The Chinese authoritarian structure obviously offers a different perception of how to handle data, and the relationship between government and companies in China is very different from a western societal perspective. We can now see these Chinese companies emerging, and we're most likely coming into a 10-year timeframe where we might not have this very American domination anymore in regards to a basic internet infrastructure. We can see both Chinese and other actors stepping up their game when it comes to infrastructure on the internet. They're rolling out 5G services, for example.

The basic power structures governing the foundations of the internet are shifting. Yet we are generally without immediate information literacy surrounding what it means to be on the internet, and how using the internet and all its services can really be a limitation for you when it comes to actually understanding foundational and basic human rights. There's the individual level and then there's this global level of MIL. Both of them are shifting, and it's important both from a personal perspective and a state perspective to be wary and understand this shifting process.

CML: They are really big tradeoffs with these different models of how to go forward, and we do need to understand those in depth.

CH: Oh yes. When we look towards our digital world, it's very easy to think of it as being separated from the physical world, but in many aspects it's highly connected. The digital world of Chinese environments or an Indian environment or Swedish or an American are different for many different people. Then also, some countries influence others more. One discussion we have right now in the Swedish perspective is that we use quite a lot of American internet services such as Facebook and Google and Tumbler, for example.

All these platforms over the years have changed their policies and tweak their services in different aspects, where the values and frames sets of those companies come to be also the borders between the values that are represented in the Swedish context, because we use those services. For example, even though we in Sweden

might have a broader perspective on LGBTQ rights, that might not be the case in one or the other of these services. We've become forced into a value system of another environment that we might not have wanted from the start where the value of the core service is so big that it still meaningful to us to have that service. Obviously that risks shifting the narrative in a country such as Sweden, even though that wasn't the intent from the beginning.

CML: Having these discussions is critical in to preserve cultural values and also to advance them, in the sense of educating. The Democratic Dialogue project that you are heading shows that the Swedish government values this process, and that they're willing to put resources behind it and really see the importance of it. I think that's an example that the whole world can learn from.

CH: Yes, we will be happy to spread both the goods and the bads of our upcoming work over the coming years so that others can use it to the extent that they want.

CML: Thank you – we will look forward to speaking with you again. Do you have any other important messages, advice, or thoughts that you want to share?

CH: One of the most important things that I've come to understand over the short period of time that I've worked with this particular national initiative is how quick the pace is in movements when it comes to media in particular, and in how information is spread. Being on your toes and understanding those shifts is really important. It's also easy to be gobbled up in all that change and losing your footing, but we need to hang onto really foundational basic structures regarding ethics and values and such, that do not change quickly. Being on those two speed levels at the same time I think is critical towards successfully helping people navigate the digital and physical worlds.
Trying to go fast and slow at the same time – it's very tricky! Because it's risky to become gobbled up by the speed and everything that goes on, but it's also risky to not be true to your values and a more slow pace of society. Equally, yet, it's easy to think that "Oh, it all goes so fast, I might not be interested in this because something new will happen soon enough." That will also put you at risk of not actually understanding the evolving world. It's a balancing act – but we need our foundations.

CML News

The National Association for Media literacy Education (NAMLE) has awarded Dr. Bobbie Eisenstock, Journalism Faculty, California State University, Northridge, and Advisory Board, Office of Community Engagement, the Elizabeth Thoman Service Award for 2919. CML worked with Dr. Eisenstock's Journalism Class, Diversity and Service Learning, as a community partner for the 2017-2018 fall semesters. In 2003, the NAMLE (then AMLA) Board created the Meritorious Service Award "to be given to individuals or projects that have significantly contributed to the growth and quality of the field of media literacy." This award is intended to honor those who have given many years of service helping to build infrastructure or otherwise remaining mostly behind-the-scenes, and often unacknowledged.

In 2017, NAMLE changed the name of the award in honor of Elizabeth Thoman, a founding board member of NAMLE. Liz also founded the Center for Media Literacy and was a leading voice in the American media literacy movement during her life. Liz passed away in December 2016. Read more about Liz's legacy in this issue of "Connect!ons."

The International Encyclopedia of Media Literacy, 2 Volume Set, edited by Renee Hobbs and Paul Milhailidis, has just been published: ISBN: 978-1-118-97824-5 May 2019 Wiley-Blackwell 1650 Pages. Michelle Linford, Executive Director of EPIK, and CML's Tessa Jolls contributed an article on Censorship and Appropriateness.

Infographic

Media literacy rests on a process of inquiry – the ability to question media content and to understand how media works as a global symbolic system. With these goals in mind, it is essential to emphasize that media literacy is based on skepticism. It is based on questioning, not on directive instruction or automatic assumptions, conscious or not. To have bias is to be human and should be acknowledged; with media literacy education, one of the roles of teachers is to help students learn to identify bias so that they can discern what is being told and what is being sold, and judge for themselves.

More Media Literacy Infographics are available on the CML website.

About Us...

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

CONSORTIUM
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Uniting for Development

Media Literacy Resources

EU Initiatives

- Action Plan against Disinformation, European Commission, December 2018

- Communication on Tackling disinformation: a European Approach, European Commission, April 2018

- Securing Free and Fair Elections, European Commission, September 2018

- Code of Practice on Disinformation, Code Signatories, September 2018

- Final report of the High Level Expert Group on Fake News and Online Disinformation, High Level Expert Group, March 2018

Reports, Studies, and Articles

- The Internet's Challenge to Democracy: Framing the Problem and Assessing Reforms, Nathaniel Persily, Kofi Annan Foundation

- Online disinformation and the EU's response, European Parliamentary Research Service, February 2019

- Challenging Truth and Trust: A Global Inventory of Organized Social Media Manipulation, Samantha Bradshaw, Philip N. Howard, University of Oxford, July 2018

- Understanding and Addressing the Disinformation Ecosystem, Schudson and Zelizer, Annenberg School for Communication, March 2018

- Measuring the reach of "fake news" and online disinformation in Europe, Fletcher et al., Reuters Institute for the study of Journalism, February 2018

- Information Disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making, Council of Europe, September 2017

- Media Manipulation and Disinformation Online, Alice Marwick and Rebecca Lewis, Data and Society Research Institute, May 2017

- Media Literacy: A Foundational Skill for Democracy, Tessa Jolls and Michele Johnsen, Hastings Law Journal, June 2018

- Learner at the Center of a Networked World, Aspen Institute Report, 2014

- The Western Balkans: A Growing Disinformation Battleground, David Wemer, Atlantic Council, March 2019

- The Spread of True and False News Online, Soroush Vosoughi, Deb Roy, and Sinan Aral, Science, March 2018

- "Fighting back against fake news: A new UN handbook aims to explain (and resist) our current information disorder," Julie Posetti and Cherilyn Ireton, Nieman Lab, September 2018
- "Deepfakes and the New Disinformation War: The Coming of Age of Post-Truth Geopolitics," Robert Chesney and Danielle Citron, Foreign Affairs, January/February 2019

Websites, Videos, and More

- EU vs Disinfo | https://euvsdisinfo.eu

- Kremlin Watch | https://www.kremlinwatch.eu

- Alliance for Securing Democracy | https://securingdemocracy.gmfus.org/

- Newseum | http://www.newseum.org/tag/media-literacy

New Tool Addressing CML Framework and News Literacy

Dr. Bobbie Eisenstock developed this tool, utilizing CML's framework for deconstruction, as well as Guiding Questions to explore the nature of news, and tested the Worksheet in her News Literacy Journalism class:
http://www.bemedialiterate.com/analyzing-news-worksheet.html

Checking the Fact-Checkers

As concerns about disinformation and misinformation have grown in recent years, a new form of journalism has emerged: fact checking. Numerous websites are now devoted to fact checking, some with specialized topics like environmental or climate change fact checking, some with an emphasis on politics, some with an emphasis on a particular geographic location. There are as many topics for fact-checking as there are for the news itself.

The aim of these sites is to provide "unbiased" information that are verified by professional fact-checkers according to criteria established previously, and often disclosed for public perusal. But like all media messages, these websites should be critically analyzed to find the bias, because bias always exists in an imperfect world of information. This is not to say that fact checking is unhelpful – it can certainly provide more information and other perspectives – but it is no substitute for individual judgment about the framing and content of media messages.

AHA!	There may be different interpretations of facts!
Key Question #3	How might different people understand this message differently?
Core Concept #3:	Different people experience the same media message differently.
Key Word:	Audience
Key Question #4	What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in – or omitted from, this message?
Core Concept #4:	Media messages have embedded values and points of view.
Key Word:	Content
Grade Level:	6-12
Materials:	Do an internet search and identify a fact-checking website of interest. Display on a screen(s) available to the class.

ACTIVITY: Discuss with students ideas about fact-checking and why fact-checking has become a new offering of numerous publishers. Ask students to break into groups of 3-5, and then to discuss amongst themselves what might be useful for them in regards to fact-checking websites, and also, what criteria they might expect fact-checkers to use to verify the information that they present: what examples might they cite of best practices for fact-checkers?

Then, select a fact-checking website to explore in depth with students. Use the Five Key Questions of Media Literacy to deconstruct the site, as a beginning to

understanding more about how the site is constructed. Ask the students to cite evidence for their opinions and assumptions about the site: how do they know?

Then, break students into groups again and ask them to find out as much information about the site as possible, using the 5 Key Questions as a starting point: who publishes the site? Who does the fact-checking? What kind of branding is associated with the site? What kinds of techniques are used? How is the site financed? Is there any information about how much financing the site receives, and from whom? What audience does the site serve? Who is targeted and why? What is the bias of the site? Is it easy to tell? What is the site's reputation? Who says? And why? Fact checking raises as many questions as it answers, but ultimately, the questions are ours to answer.