MEDIA EDUCATION IN CANADA
- THE SECOND SPRING -

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1: INTRODUCTION

In 1922, Lewis Selznik, the Hollywood producer, is reported to have said: "If Canadian stories are worthwhile making into movies, then companies will be sent into Canada to make them." Selznik's dismissive words encapsulate a not uncommon attitude among some Americans to their northern neighbours. Canada, in this view, is not a place where interesting things happen. But in one area, at least, this presumption is manifestly untrue. The interesting stories in North American media education are Canadian stories.

To understand Canadian media education and communications, we must first recognize some of our special collective character traits and our relationship to our neighbour to the south. What makes us special? Former Prime Minister Trudeau likened our living next to the United States to that of a mouse that sleeps next to an elephant: every time the elephant turns over, the mouse has to run for cover to avoid being crushed. Is it any wonder that we have such a nagging, ambivalent relationship with our American cousins?

Canada is a country that has many contradictions. On the one hand we love American brashness, their sense of adventure and risk taking and, above all, their popular culture. On the other, we need to publicly denounce them for Yankee arrogance and imperialist policies. Canadians have been described as a relentlessly polite people; too often we are put in the position of apologizing for being somewhat dull. Our national slogan might be, "I'm sorry." To say that we are a conservative, basically law-abiding people, that we continually rank at the top of the United Nations Survey as the best place in the world to live, never seems to inflate our meager sense of pride. Either we are too humble or simply too insecure to boast about it.
As a country whose population of 30 million [there are more people in the state of California than in all of Canada] is all contained in a narrow band that stretches for some 4,000 miles across a continent, we are painfully aware of the importance of communications. We have made some major contributions to communications technology (the creation of the Anik satellite and Telidon); media theory (the work of Harold Innis, Marshall McLuhan and Dallas Smythe); and media production (The National Film Board, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and a burgeoning film industry). One of the most multicultural countries in the world, our large cities such as Toronto and Vancouver will soon have more visible minorities than the erstwhile white mainstream population. Immigrants’ on-going contribution to our cultural fabric should be seen in the context of our multiple and shifting identities. Cultural hybridity is alive and well.

Canadians have tended to define themselves by what we are not - a dangerous social practice at the best of times. The result is an amorphous, low key entity that resembles McLuhan’s notion of a cool medium, poorly defined, and encouraging us to fill in the gaps. McLuhan also noted "The calculated ambivalence of Canadians is the most efficient way of maintaining a low profile, as a receptive ground for other people's fantasies." Writer and cultural commentator Margaret Atwood has pointed out that our cultural heroes tend to be low - key and unheroic. "Beautiful Losers" - the title of a novel from our renown pop singer/writer Leonard Cohen - seems emblematic of the Canadian perspective.

Our semi-detached relationship with the United States has also encouraged an amazing comedy industry. From actors Jim Carrey and John Candy to producers like Lorne Michaels who created Saturday Night Live, America's best known live television comedy show, Canadians have demonstrated a very marketable comedic talent. All jesting aside, there is intellectual substance here for a postmodern media and cultural theory, one that is playful, fluid and ambiguous. That Canadians read American popular culture ironically may be a collective character flaw but most of us see it as a gift. Seeing American stories on our television sets or up on the silver screen, a Canadian may be heard muttering, "That's not us, but it's damn close!"

The segue to Canadian media education is easy. Compared to our American cousins, we are considerably more advanced. As this article will point out, all of our provinces have mandated media education in the curriculum, compared with only a dozen or so of the states. One could argue that the launching of media education in Canada came about for two major reasons 1.) our critical concerns about the pervasiveness of American popular culture and 2.) our equitable, tolerant, and, until recently, progressive system of education across the country which fostered the necessary contexts for new educational paradigms.

2: THE HISTORY

In Canada secondary school film courses blossomed in the late 1960’s and the first wave of media education began under the banner of "screen education". An early organization called CASE (Canadian Association for Screen Education) sponsored the first large gathering of media teachers in 1969 at Toronto’s York University. Participants
came from across the country. Largely as a result of budget cuts and the general back-to-the-basics philosophy, this first wave died out in the early seventies. But in the 1980's and 1990's there was new growth in elementary and secondary school media education. And, as of September 1999, media education will be a mandated part of the English Language Arts curriculum across Canada.

Canada's ten provinces and three northern territories each have their own education system. With responsibility for education resting in the hands of the provinces, there are differences in how each province deals with media education.

The Provinces of Western Canada : British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. The Yukon and the North West Territories

In the summer of 1991, a group met in Vancouver to form the Canadian Association for Media Education (CAME). Although most of the members are classroom teachers, other organizations are also represented, including the National Film Board of Canada, Knowledge TV Network, Pacific Cinematique, International Development Education Resource Association, MediaWatch and ADBUSTERS magazine. Their objectives are to educate Canadians about the media, to promote media education and to encourage Canadian cultural expression in the media.

CAME has hosted yearly forums on media education topics. In the summer of 1994 CAME members were involved in organizing a two week summer institute for teachers wishing to teach media education. And in the summer of 1995, CAME helped organize a credit summer course in media education at Simon Fraser University. CAME has published two resource samplers of information and teaching strategies for teachers beginning work in media education.

In the spring of 1994, CAME signed a contract with the Ministry of Education to produce a Conceptual Framework of Media Education. This framework was made available to the curriculum review committees that began meeting in the fall of 1994 with instructions to incorporate suggestions for media education into all curriculum areas. It is prescribed in BC curricula from K-12. The framework was also given to the Western Consortium - a group that has written a common Language Arts curriculum for the four western provinces and three territories. This curriculum includes a mandated segment on media education, which will differ from province to province.

And in the fall of 1996, British Columbia was the first of the western provinces to put into effect the new Language Arts Curriculum. Media education is represented in two ways. First, media education is mandated in all Language Arts courses from K-12 as one third of the material taught. Second, media education is part of the Integrated Resource Package (IRP) which is cross curricular in all subjects from K-12.

British Columbia has still to develop the resources to help put into effect these changes. There is a major need to address the question of teacher training in media education. This is true of every province.
Since the early 60s Media Education in Alberta schools has been recognized by a few "cutting edge" teachers. On a formal basis, it was not until 1981 that a Viewing Strand was recognized as one of the strands (Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening) of the English Language Arts Program, Grades 1 to 12. A teacher implementation monograph on Viewing at the junior and senior high levels was developed by the Alberta Department of Education and distributed to schools, but implementation was slow and fragmented with few opportunities for teacher workshops or training courses. Some school districts in Edmonton and Calgary conducted implementation activities on a short term basis. The Viewing Strand, in practice, was not considered compulsory and therefore not well implemented by teachers.

In the spring of 1993, based on the success of a 1991 media education conference, a group of educators and media professionals formed the Alberta Association for Media Awareness (AAMA). Its goals are to promote media awareness, education and understanding as essential survival skills for all Albertans, children and adults. Among other activities, AAMA provides forums for information, discussion and action on media issues; prepares reaction and suggestions on media issues such as new government policy and programs; provides conferences and training sessions for teachers; maintains a resource centre; and establishes action networks.

Since 1993, AAMA has continued to promote media awareness and to organize workshops each year, but the level of activity has been modest due to significant local, provincial and federal government financial and human cutbacks. An AAMA achievement has been to provide continuing critical and developmental input to the Western Canada Protocol (WCP) Curriculum Framework for the development of English Language Arts through the Alberta Department of Education representatives. This has resulted in major changes to the Alberta Department of Education revised English/Language Arts curriculum Grades K - 12 including: significant emphasis on Media Education and, for the first time, the use of the term "media text".

Mandatory implementation of the new Alberta English Language Arts curricula are scheduled for: Grades K to 9, September 1999; Grade 10, September 2000; Grade 11, September 2001 and Grade 12, September 2002. In addition, the new curricula are organized around five general outcomes, with media outcomes integrated throughout along a student outcomes basis so that student evaluation will be facilitated. A number of instructional guides and evaluation examples are under development to help teachers ensure student results. The Classroom Assessment Materials Project (CAMP) was developed for English Language Arts, and contains assessment activities and scoring criteria that include reference to media or viewing In the neighbouring province of Saskatchewan, Mick Ellis, then Audio Visual Consultant for the Saskatoon Board of Education [and the first Canadian to obtain a Master’s degree in Media Education ] and a group of Saskatoon educators founded Media Literacy Saskatchewan (MLS) in January of 1988. MLS goals include: to establish and maintain communication among educators; to advocate for the development and integration of media education in educational curricula; to influence educational policy makers; to provide professional support and to maintain contact with Canadian and international media education organizations. Media Literacy Saskatchewan publishes a quarterly newsletter for its members called MEDIA VIEW.
Members of MLS have developed three programs - Telemedia, Newsmedia, Kindermedia - for use in the schools and have also developed a media education guide extending from primary through to the end of secondary school, believing that media education should be integrated with any and all aspects of the school curriculum. In 1991, MLS became an official special subject council of the Saskatchewan Teachers Federation (STF) gaining access to all teachers in Saskatchewan through the STF Bulletin and allowing the funding of inservices and conferences.

Media education is a part of the common essential learnings and one of the supporting domains of the basic Language Arts structure. In core-content English courses, media studies are now required: video in Grade 10, radio in Grade 11 and print journalism in Grade 12. But there is no resource plan for these courses and it will be up to teacher initiative to develop resources for these.

Locally developed media courses have diminished except in production courses. Saskatchewan Education has mandated three options for Grade 11 English besides the required credits in English: Media Studies, Journalism and Creative Writing. Availability of such courses depends upon student registration. Larger urban schools offer all three while smaller or rural schools tend to get registration enough for two out of three courses. While there is little in-service for all three, there is enthusiasm and a realistic attitude about ongoing updating of media studies resources by teachers. Some resources are being purchased for these courses but there is a great need for formal teacher training.

For a number of years Manitoba has had an official provincial policy on Media Education. Language Arts teachers were encouraged to integrate Media into their teaching in the Early and Middle Years by examining the messages coming from television advertising. Secondary school teachers were asked to investigate the media as part of their English courses.

Now, as part of the Western Canada Protocol group, Manitoba’s new language arts curriculum has a mandated elements of media education under the title of viewing and representing. All frameworks of outcomes and standards from K to 12 make specific references to media texts and to the skills required for media education. By the end of 1998, implementation documents for all grades will be completed, as well as a list of resources.

The challenge in Manitoba will be to provide formal training for teachers of the media. The University of Manitoba offered a summer school in media education for a number of years taught by Brian Murphy, President of MAML Now the University’s Faculty of Education is proposing a regular course for teachers in media education.

The Manitoba Association for Media Literacy (MAML) was founded in October 1990, the result of a Special Areas Group (SAG) Conference sponsored by the Art Educators Association of Manitoba. The role of MAML is to promote the aims of Media Education, in particular to assist individuals to examine the role of the media in society. To accomplish its goals, MAML sponsors presentations and workshops; assists in the development of media education programs for Manitoba schools; provides in-service opportunities; and publishes DIRECTIONS, a quarterly newsletter.
The Yukon and the North West Territories are members of the Western Consortium. As such they are developing media education components of their Language Arts Programs. Some teachers in these places are working on their own to introduce media education into their courses.


In 1995 an Atlantic provinces initiative - similar to the Language Arts Consortium in Western Canada - developed a common Language Arts curriculum in which media education figures prominently. It builds on the notion that literacy has moved beyond competency in the written word to the ability to use and understand visual and technological means of communications. This curriculum was piloted in 1996 and implemented in 1997. The documents state that media education is a critical element of the Language Arts curriculum and make it part of every English course.

In the fall of 1992, a group of teachers, parents, librarians, media professionals, and environmentalists formed the Association of Media Literacy for Nova Scotia AML-NS. One of the reasons that brought the group of about one hundred people together was the need to stop the Youth News Network (YNN) from selling its commercial news network to Nova Scotia schools. They succeeded in both forming a media education group and in stopping YNN.

AML-NS members publish a twice yearly newsletter - *The Mediator*. Past President, Eileen O’Connell has a monthly column on media education issues in the Halifax Chronicle Herald, Nova Scotia’s largest circulation daily paper. As well, Gail Lethbridge, editor of *The Mediator*, writes a regular column for *The Teacher*, the newsletter of the Nova Scotia’s teachers’ union.

Members of AML-NS have presented workshops to parents and community groups as well as at several provincial in-services for teachers. Since 1993, the Atlantic Film Festival has invited teachers to participate with their students in the ScreenScene program and sponsored one event for teachers dealing with media.

The Literacy section of the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Culture together with AML-NS have co-sponsored a media education project for adult learners. Funded by the National Literacy Secretariat and written by AML-NS founding president, Pat Kipping, the kit consists of a workshop manual, a collection of resources, and an annotated guide.

The Nova Scotia College of Art and Design Education Department has built into their courses some components which raise the issue of media education. As well summer course have been offered by Mount St. Vincent in media education.

Central Canada - Quebec and Ontario

Over half of Canada’s population lives in the two central Canadian provinces of Ontario and Quebec. Quebec's Ministry of Education has developed a reformed curriculum to
be implemented in elementary and secondary schools by 1999. Media education will be taught in a cross curricular pedagogical plan so that it is a basic skill and competence.

In September of 1990, a group of French and English speaking secondary teachers, university academics, and others interested in media education formed the Association for Media Education in Quebec (AMEQ), a bilingual grassroots organization composed mainly of teachers. AMEQ is co-chaired by Lee Rother of the Laurenval School Board and Brenda Wilson of Trafalgar School for Girls.

The primary purpose of AMEQ is to provide information, lesson plans and ideas, expertise, and professional development regarding media education. AMEQ contends that media education should be included both in the kindergarten through grade eleven curriculum and in all teacher training programs. AMEQ actively promotes the idea that parents should also be media education educators for their children.

AMEQ has sponsored student media festivals, media education conferences, day long workshops for teachers and parents and parent information evenings. AMEQ members regularly lead workshops at provincial education and parent conferences, school board professional development programs, and guest lecture at McGill University’s and Bishop’s University’s Faculties of Education. AMEQ executive members have also presented briefs to the Quebec Ministry of Education concerning proposed curricular changes and also to the Canadian Radio-televison Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) on violence and the media.

In 1991, the Montreal-based, Centre for Literacy, which maintains an open resources collection on every aspect of literacy, began to receive a large number of requests for resources on media education. The Centre has increased the media component of their collection and organizes workshops on media education. A similar development has taken place at the Centre Saint-Pierre, a community based continuing education centre.

Ontario, where over one third of Canada’s population lives, was the first educational jurisdiction in North America to make media education a mandatory part of the curriculum. In 1987 Ontario’s Ministry of Education released new guidelines that emphasized the importance of teaching media education as part of the regular English curriculum. At least one third of a course in both intermediate and senior division English must be devoted to media study. And in Grades 7 and 8 (12 and 13 year olds), ten percent of classroom time was dedicated to some form of media studies. In addition students were allowed to choose a complete media studies course as one of the five English credits required for graduation.

At the beginning of April 1995, the Ontario Ministry of Education released two documents: The Common Curriculum: Policies and Outcomes Grades 1 to 9 clearly outlines what students are expected to know and when they are expected to know it. Provincial Standards: Language: Grades 1 to 9 provide objective and consistent indicators to determine how well students are learning. From Grades 1 through to 9 in Language Arts there are strands which must be- Listening and Speaking, Reading, Writing, Viewing and Representation. The Viewing and Representing strands ensure that media education is now a mandated part of the Language Arts curriculum beginning from Grade 1. There were further revisions to Ontario’s Language Arts curricula in 1998 and
media education continues to be a strongly mandated part of the English Language Arts curricula in both the elementary and secondary panel.

One group above all is responsible for the continuing successful development of media education in Ontario. This is the Association for Media Literacy (AML). There were seventy people at the AML's founding meeting in Toronto in April of 1978. The founders of the association were Barry Duncan, a secondary school teacher and head of English at Toronto's School of Experiential Education; Arlene Moskovitch, then with the National Film Board of Canada, now a consultant; Linda Schulyer, an elementary teacher, who has since become a principal in Playing With Time, Inc. responsible for the popular DEGRASSI television series; and Jerry McNab, head of the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre, now head of Magic Lantern, a production and distribution centre. By the end of the 1980's, the AML had over 1000 members and a track record of distinguished achievements.

In 1986, the Ontario Ministry of Education and the Ontario Teachers' Federation invited ten AML members to prepare a Media Education Resource Guide for teachers. Published by the government in the summer of 1989, the 232-page guide is designed to help teachers of media. It includes teaching strategies and models as well as rationale and aims. This guide is used in many English speaking countries and has been translated into French, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish.

Prior to the release of the Resource Book, the Ministry seconded the AML authors to give a series of in-service training days to teachers across Ontario in preparation for the introduction of media courses. Since 1987, AML members have presented workshops across Canada, and in Australia, Japan, Europe, Latin America and the United States.

The Ontario resource guide describes media education as being concerned "with the process of understanding and using the mass media. It is also concerned with helping students develop an informed and critical understanding of the nature of the mass media, the techniques used by them, and the impact of these techniques. . . Media education also aims to provide students with the ability to create media products."

Three times a year, the AML publishes MEDIACY which updates AML members on what has been happening, lists new publications in the field, announces speakers and topics for quarterly events, and publishes articles on related topics. During the school year, the AML sponsors quarterly events bringing in speakers for workshop presentations to teachers.

From 1987 to 1993, the AML offered three courses for media teachers during summer school in conjunction with the Faculty of Education at the University of Toronto. A steep increase in the cost of summer school courses brought these courses to an end.

In May of 1989, the AML brought together forty-six educators and media professionals for a two day invitational think tank to discuss future developments of media education in Ontario. This led to two international media education conferences at the University of Guelph in 1990 and 1992. Both conferences were very successful attracting over 500 participants from around the world.
After the 1992 conference, representatives from Canadian provincial media education groups met in Toronto to form the Canadian Association of Media Education Organizations (CAMEO). The purpose of the group is to promote media education across Canada and link together Canadian media education organizations.

The AML is coordinating the media education portion of Summit 2000: Children, Youth and The Media - Beyond the Millennium, an international conference to be held in Toronto, Canada from May 13 to 17, 2000. The 1,500 delegates from around the world will be people involved in the production and distribution of screen-based media for children and youth, as well as anyone involved in media education. This is a unique opportunity for those who use and teach about the media to meet and talk with those who produce and distribute it. The Summit website is found at www.summit2000.net

3: THE THEORY

Whether or not media education theory in Canada is special and unique should be left to a future doctoral thesis. We would have serious doubts. Canadian teachers are, like most informed media educators, participating in an eclectic circus. We are enthusiastic pragmatists, selecting from a rich menu of critical, cultural, and educational theories and filtering them for classroom use. Because of the small number of trained teachers - those with solid in-service training or those who have taken university courses in film and/or media and cultural studies, the majority use only snippets from a variety of sources: a few quotes from McLuhan, English studies, a diatribe from Neil Postman, a bit of Noam Chomsky’s propaganda model drawn from Manufacturing Consent and the rest culled from resource guides, mass media text books, articles in newspapers and magazines, television documentaries and news programs.

As a generalization, there seems to be a world wide consensus about contextualizing media education within the frameworks of the British inspired ‘cultural studies,’ an Interdisciplinary approach to the construction of knowledge which problematizes texts and foregrounds representations of gender, race and class. Thus the critical premises behind our resource guide (strongly influenced at the time by UK media educator Len Masterman) and our media textbooks - the majority of them written by the AML executive- are compatible with comparable material emanating from Australia and the UK. Of paramount importance is the influence of the discourses that are attached to the subjects that teachers are trained in, in most cases English.

Robert Morgan, a cultural studies professor at the Ontario Institute for the Study of Education, surveyed over 100 teachers who were teaching media in Ontario and critiqued the problematic challenges facing English teachers who teach media. He found that literary biases, Elitist or canonical cultural expectations and typical English classroom practices shaped the media classroom. These would include using literary terminology; putting media into the context of myth studies (Joseph Campbell, Northrop Frye); uncovering ideological bias and media manipulation (The assumption that we are all seduced, passive dupes of the media); looking for discriminating qualitative responses to media texts (program x has more pleasing aesthetics than program y).
To remedy these limitations, Morgan recommends that media teachers move beyond deconstruction by "acknowledging the individual, ambivalent, contradictory and shifting practices of media use, rather than attempting to suppress them through the assignation of stable and inherent textual meanings." (Morgan, P. 121.) Morgan has other recommendations which are propped up with innumerable references to cultural and media education theory.

"We should begin with students and teachers' media interests and pleasures... Teachers should explore the dynamics of media practices they are implicated in and which are central to their communities... Quoting C. Mercer he recommends an examination of 'the spirals of pleasure and power: the modes of pleasure, the modes of persuasion, the types of consent operative within a given cultural form'... This posits multiple points of resistance and negotiation rather than the victimology we now have."

Morgan raises important issues which address the complexities of discourse analysis and critical pedagogy. What is missing, however, are the ways of doing this effectively in the classroom. Progressive media teachers should reckon not only with the limitations of current practice but be encouraged to imagine productive classroom scenarios, a pedagogy of the possible that is rich in irony, pleasure, contradiction and subversion. The result would move us beyond our reliance on top down, protectionist models.

Ontario's Key Concepts

To examine the critical premises behind media education in Canada it would be instructive to look at the widely acclaimed Ontario Ministry of Education Media Literacy Resource Guide. Published in 1989, the 232 page guide was a landmark achievement. At the time there was nothing like it. A minimum of media theory was followed by numerous practical classroom activities, a boon for teachers with limited knowledge and self-confidence in teaching media. (It is interesting to note that our key concepts of media have been adapted by innumerable media education enterprises in the United States.) That several other provinces were inspired to write their own media studies documents is the most important legacy. The new curriculum documents for the language arts from the Atlantic provinces (1997) and British Columbia (1996) contain major sections on implementing media literacy. In terms of their critical premises, there are sufficient parallels between the documents to make them compatible.

Key concept #1 All media are constructions Media are not simple reflections of external reality; they present productions which have specific purposes

Key concept #2 The Media Construct Reality The media often come to us with observations and experience preconstructed by the media with attitudes and interpretations already built in.

Key concept #3 Audiences negotiate meaning in media. Each of us interacts in unique ways to media texts based on such factors as gender, race, age, class and through our life experiences. Each of us negotiates meaning in different ways. Reception theory is implicit throughout.
Key concept # 4 Media have commercial implications Media literacy includes an awareness of the economic basis of mass media production. Networks look for audiences to be delivered to sponsors. A knowledge of this allows students to understand how program content makes them targets for advertisers and organizes viewers into marketable groups. The issue of ownership and control is of vital importance at a time when there are more choices but fewer voices. (90% of the world’s newspapers, magazines, television stations, films, computer software are owned by a dozen corporate conglomerates.)

Key concept # 5 Media contain ideological and value messages Media literacy involves an awareness of the ideological implications and value systems of media texts. Ideology tends to be invisible and is associated with common sense assumptions we make about dominant and subordinate groups in society. We need to decode media messages about consumerism, gender representation, the acceptance of authority, and unquestioning patriotism.

Key concept #6 Media have social and political implications An important dimension of media literacy is an awareness of the broad range of social and political effects stemming from the media. The changing nature of family life, the use of leisure time and the television campaigns of politicians are three such examples. The mass media serve to legitimize societal values and attitudes. The media also have a major role in mediating global events and issues from civil rights to terrorism. Finally, the struggle for a Canadian identity will continue to be difficult since we are dominated by American media and popular culture.

Key concept # 7 Form and content are closely related in the media Making the form/content connections relates to the thesis of Marshall McLuhan that "The medium is the message." That is, that each medium has its own special grammar and bias and codifies reality in unique ways. Thus, different media might report the same event but create different impressions and different messages.

Key concept # 8 Each medium has unique aesthetic forms. Students should have the opportunity to develop media literacy skills that will enable them not only to decode and understand media texts, but also to enjoy the unique aesthetic form of each. Our enjoyment of media is enhanced by an awareness of how pleasing forms or effects are created.

Media Education and Audience

There are several important dimensions to audience studies:

i.) Work on audience gives us insight into how we make sense of the media, whether we are talking about our students, our peers, our families or ourselves. Understanding the formation of audiences is especially important in understanding the dynamics of youth culture.

ii.) Today social and cultural issues are of paramount importance in our schools. When issues are mediated through gender, culture and race, investigations of audiences help
to explain how and why we position ourselves and others in responding to media texts. Audience study encourages us to have empathy with other peoples’ responses, to recognize intellectual and social complexity and contradictions.

iii.) Audience study has foregrounded the importance of the pleasures of the text. It has helped us conceive of viewers as social subjects with multiple subjectivities. Similarly, texts are now seen as being polysemic - they convey many meanings, and hence elicit many different readings. In our responses, we learn how we can consent to the dominant or preferred reading (This is what many TV producers want us to do) or we can resist and provide negotiated and/or oppositional readings.

iv.) Media can be seen as a symbolic resource which many adults will use - but especially young people - in making sense of their experiences, in relating to others, and in organizing the practices of everyday life.

v.) Audience study should make us skeptical of the effects model in media research; it should also make us wary of the questionable research base behind typical moral panics in recent years - the kids are being turned into zombies or little hellions because of the media - and the subsequent urge to censor or ban controversial media material. That most young people manage to mediate rather effectively controversial or violent media texts correlates nicely with the important insights of audience research.

vi.) Audience study can lead us to learn about interpretive communities - Electronic Bulletin Boards on North American television programs, web sites containing information and gossip on daytime soaps, the X-Files, The Simpsons and Seinfeld and on conventions for Trekkies (Star Trek fans). Many of these groups may participate in what Henry Jenkins has called “textual poaching” - appropriating material from pop culture but making it your own. For example, some Star Trek fans create their own Star Trek scripts with gay characters and themes, and rewrite endings of stories in the series.

vii.) According to MIT computer researcher Sherry Turkle, internet chat groups have become "a significant social laboratory for experimenting with the constructions and reconstructions of self that characterize postmodern life. In its virtual reality, we self-fashion and self-create." (Turkle, P.180) We are invited to play any role we want. Today, I am a transvestite midget, tomorrow, I plan to be a male fashion model. And who is to know? Research on the educational values of multiple and evolving identities on the internet will help to provide media educators with valuable insights into this under theorized domain.

When teachers examine their students’ cultural practices through knowledge of audience theory, they can not help but change the dynamics of their classrooms. In this regard, the work of UK media educator David Buckingham and his colleagues have contributed significantly. The emphasis on finding out what the students already know about media and how they make sense of it should be the starting points for all media teachers. (Buckingham, 1991, 1993, 1998)

include channel surfing, data surfing, multitasking (the ability to consume media and do several other tasks at the same time) and various forms of pattern recognition that are analogous to the ways surfers and skateboarders negotiate their territory.

Media and globalization

The increasing trend towards globalization of culture has been fueled in part by transnational media corporations and recent mergers, e.g. Time-Warner, ABC-Disney. These trends suggest some important theoretical and practical challenges to our notions of cultural sovereignty and democratic citizenship. That global studies in the school curriculum is only just beginning to recognize the importance of media education to their project suggests the need for new media education paradigms and interdisciplinary partnerships.

Henry Giroux, an American educator and critical pedagogy advocate, points out that "critical educators need to take up culture as a vital source for developing a politics of identity, community, and pedagogy. In this perspective, culture is not viewed as monolithic or unchanging, but as a shifting sphere of multiple and heterogeneous borders where different histories, languages, experiences, and voices intermingle amid diverse relations of power and privilege." (Giroux, P. 32)

Critical marketing and neo-conservatism

Educationally, the right wing conservative governments in several Canadian provinces are turning back the clock. They are fearful of critical thinking practices, cultural criticism and knowledge of the formation of values and ideology. Media educators need to have informed perspectives on our right to democratic access to information, especially that which is constructed by governments and corporations. In 1994, Len Masterman recommended a new paradigm for media education: teaching critical marketing. (Masterman, 1994, P 87) With public relations firms and spin doctors being hired to engineer consent for policies and programs, we have to be constantly vigilant and help our students see through the bafflegab.

Media education and digital literacy

The new and converging communication technologies have left many media educators behind as the computer and technology departments in our schools have tended to dominate the discourses of technology. The liability of the typical unreflective approach to NCCT is that educators and technocrats tend to resort to our old paradigms of thinking borrowed from traditional media thereby blinding them to new possibilities As Marshall McLuhan reminds us, "we are driving forward while looking through the rear view."

The key concepts of media are certainly quite relevant to the digital technologies. Media educators should be concerned about their special codes and grammar, about the issues around ownership and control (Microsoft rules the world!) about identity formations and negotiation of meaning (Turkle, 1996) That new communication technologies can
be foisted on ill-prepared teachers unproblematically, is symptomatic of the overselling of a vision of rapturous technotopia.

But there are many other dimensions which educators, researchers and cultural theorists need to resolve. "We need to tease out the relationships between the traditional and new literacies." (Julian Sefton - Green, p.10) Kathleen Tyner concludes her groundbreaking book *Literacy in a Digital World*, as follows: 'Educational strategies which blend critical literacy, experiential learning, critical pedagogy can do much to explain the relationship of literacy, technology, and society. Such a blend called media education, for want of a better turn of phrase, has the potential to shape the course of modern education." (Tyner, P. 230.)

4: THE PRACTICE

There are several approaches and roles for media education in Ontario's classrooms. One of these is an ontological function in which students' relationship with fantasy, reality, one another and the world can be sorted out. Part of this study can involve values -- those of both the students and the media messages. By identifying and examining values messages in media works, students are able to examine and prioritize their own values. Media education can also serve to enhance consumer awareness. Through an understanding of marketing concepts such as psychographics, demographics and market share, students can come to an understanding of the role that the mass media play in their lives and their roles in the socioeconomic system.

Another perspective served by media education deals with citizenship, particularly as it compares to consumerism. Students can consider the roles of citizenship and how understanding media messages can help them be more effective citizens. A cultural perspective to media messages can be especially powerful. Ontario, like most other Canadian provinces, receives a great deal of American media messages. Considering issues of Canadian identity and American identity can further students' understanding of who they are and how they fit into their local and global communities.

Authenticity

Whichever approaches are taken, authenticity is the key to relevant learning. Authenticity means that the media texts studied have interest and relevance in the students' lives. High authenticity is desirable for all curricula and likely easiest to achieve in media studies if the teacher is aware of and sensitive to students' maturity, interests and abilities. Canada, and especially Ontario, are in a rather unique position with regard to copyright laws and resources. This will be further explained later, under Resources.

Developmental Stages

An important aspect of classroom practice is the appropriateness of the media study to the developmental stages of the students. For early years' students, children need to understand that media are not real, that cartoon characters are fantasy, that magic is the result of special effects, and that there is (sometimes) a difference between the
commercial messages and the programs. Young children are very concrete thinkers and, for them, media education may involve introducing some abstract concepts. For children of this age, fear of abandonment by their parents is a major concern. Media messages that touch on this fear (and there are many -- witness the last several Disney features) need to be examined and processed with them. It is especially useful for parents and teachers to be aware of this overriding fear and its recurrence in children’s stories, play and toys. Teachers who can recognize manifestations of this fear are better able to help their students learn to deal with it appropriately.

Middle years students are entering adolescence, a time of great anxiety about identity. For these students, fear of abandonment of their peers is very strong. These people are not only working out their sexual identification but also preparing how to meet the responsibilities and challenges of adulthood. These are still ontological issues and processing must be done very carefully, but will fill an essential need for these people.

Measuring and assessing their own values vis-a-vis those presented in media messages will help early adolescents move on toward adulthood.

Adolescents are drawn to horror movies because these movies often present coming-of-age stories where naive young adults are threatened by monsters -- monsters which might symbolize either the challenges of adulthood or the morphing of their own bodies. Sit-coms often examine adolescent anxieties, and can also provide a useful springboard for discussion and processing.

Secondary students are in their final years of adolescence. There is a gradual shift in concern during these years. Those in early adolescence are more concerned with peer group and sexual identity than those in later adolescence. They are looking toward adulthood and the roles they will play in the other arenas. As their thinking and communicating skills increase, so too does a sense of their own power to affect external change. Global issues and citizenship may be particularly useful for study in secondary classrooms so that these students can become aware of current issues and their opportunities to act.

Classroom Practices

There are a variety of classroom practices possible within media education. Whichever is pursued, the deconstruct/construct continuum is always useful. This continuum works as follows: a common pattern of study is to deconstruct media works, identifying their parts, the functions and structures in the meaning-making process, then proceed with student constructions. In this format, the production can be used as the consolidation phase of the units, where students must have an understanding of form and content, etc. in order to create media. Just as a unit on poetry might conclude with students writing poems, a unit on television news might conclude with students producing their own newscast.

Many teachers are concerned and, in some cases frightened, by the implications of media production. They don't have studio-quality equipment, nor would they have the expertise and time necessary to set up and use it effectively. Needless to say, few schools have the facilities that are necessary to produce professional-quality messages.
A television studio, however, is not necessary for the production of television news, just as a printing press is not necessary for the production of a newspaper. A single camcorder, some careful planning and speaking, and in-camera editing are all it takes for students to begin understanding the issues around constructing a newscast. Not only can the process be simpler than we might think, but student expertise is an asset at the production phase. Students' overall familiarity with the media and the experience - of many - with technology means that teachers become co-learners. Students will happily step forward and take on technological tasks.

However simple or complex production practices are, they are invaluable in helping students understand the concepts of media literacy. There are four main ways of approaching media education in the classroom: genre-based units, theme-based units, stand-alone units, and integrated units.

**Medium-based approach**

In a medium-based media study, the characteristics, strengths and weaknesses of a particular medium are focused upon. This may begin with a naming of parts, in which the parts of a newspaper and a newspaper page are identified and labeled. While this is a useful beginning, the more successful study will consider types of newspapers, for example dailies, weeklies, tabloids, free distribution etc. It will also consider the marketing and political roles that these newspapers play. Ontario enjoys a wide selection of newspapers. The Globe and Mail, originating in Toronto, is Canada's national newspaper. There are two other Toronto dailies: the Star and Sun. Most communities have weekly newspapers, and there are many special interest papers, which are religion, culture or language-based. Such a wide choice allows students to compare and contrast newspapers both linguistically and socioeconomically. As a special event for 1998 -1999, a new Canadian national newspaper is emerging which will give teachers much to discuss as it raids other publications for writers and advertisers and jostles for position in the marketplace.

**Theme-based approach**

A theme-based study involves several media. In this case, an issue can be identified and examined in terms of how it is communicated in a variety of media. For middle school students especially, gender representation is a powerful issue. The roles and attitudes towards men and women, especially through fashion, can be examined in several media. Students at this age are especially sensitive to fashion because it can be a signifier of group acceptance and rejection. Fashion also cuts across newspapers, magazines and television as well as situation comedies, newscasts and music videos, and therefore can be the vehicle that provides the unifying theme for studying media form and content.

Just as love and war can be a theme that is examined through several literary genres, gender representation can be a unifying theme for studying several media.

**Stand-Alone approach**
For many teachers, a media studies unit is a stand-alone unit within an English course. This means that they will choose a genre or theme and study it exclusively for up to two weeks. This approach allows them to focus on the media study and teachers can be more confident that their evaluation reflects students’ understanding of the media.

Integrated Units

Integrating media studies into other classroom activities can be beneficial for creating some of the most authentic study, and also connecting the newer media, such as television or the World Wide Web, to older forms of communication, such as print or speech. Rather than announcing that they were going to study Shakespeare, one teacher introduced a unit to a grade nine class on gender representation. They discussed influences on students' self-concepts, self-esteem and sexual identities. They then examined situation comedies, movies, comic books, music videos, short stories, and Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. This integrated approach told them that they were studying gender issues, not Shakespeare. They enjoyed studying the play, and found their discussions completely authentic because they could share in, compare and contrast the various cultural values of the works examined. Integration can be the most powerful and comfortable way to accomplish media education. One challenge is that the assessment of the media concepts and those concepts related to the other integrated topics can become confusing, so teachers must build careful assessment instruments.

Sensitive Issues

Media education can be especially useful in helping students and teachers make sense of sensitive issues such as representation, sexuality, and violence. As the dynamic roles of males and females change in the evolving concept of the family, media representation provides an excellent springboard for discussion and analysis. Urban Ontario is a mosaic of ethnicity, and has absorbed most of Canada's recent immigrants. Discussions around the representation of ethnic groups are especially useful for students trying to understand these issues and their own role in Canadian life. The mass media's representation of sexuality and sex roles are also very useful when dealing with sensitive issues. Students discuss the appropriateness of various language and actions in the media. By comparing the media representations with the values honored in their homes and classrooms, they can make sense of these issues.

Assessment

As in all curricula, assessment is a key component for implementation and authentication. Ontario teachers follow the Media Literacy Resource Guide (1989) and its eight key concepts. The Common Curriculum (1994) articulated standards for the assessment of media learning for grade 3, grade 6, and grade 9. These were articulated as 'outcomes' and 'indicators' on a 6-point scale, with level 4 considered mastery. Even though recent, these standards have been replaced by a new curriculum which describes student learnings in terms of 'expectations.' Expectation statements are being developed for each grade and each level and will be used for assessment as the new curriculum phases in from September 1999 onward. The expectations statements are comprehensive and specific and will help teachers improve their assessments. The Association for Media Literacy's Chris Worsnop has made media assessment an
ongoing theme of his study and writing. His book, *Assessing Media Learning* (Wright Communications - worsnop@path.com), is helping many teachers understand authentic media assessment.

**Implementation**

At the classroom level, the implementation of media education skills has been uneven from school to school and District to District. This is not unlike other newer curricula such as Global Education. Some school boards have established media education as a priority and have supported it with ongoing in-service and the appointment of media consultants. Other school boards have left implementation to the individual teacher, who may have completed an Additional Qualifications course from a Faculty of Education, joined the Association for Media Literacy, and/or pursued individual study.

As with many other areas of the curriculum, the dedication of the individual teacher greatly influences the extent and quality of media education in the classroom. Even though all grades 7 to 12 teachers have had to dedicate at least 10% of their classroom time studying the media from 1987 onward, there was little or no Faculty of Education pre-service instruction and minimal school board in-service in Media Education. Currently, some university in-service is only available in Ottawa. Additionally, media consultants in school districts are extremely rare, the implementation task being given to those also responsible for implementing language study.

Associations such as Ontario's Association for Media Literacy continue to be the strongest ongoing support for teachers pursuing additional expertise and ideas in media education. Seven such associations across Canada are gathered together as CAMEO (Canadian Association for Media Education Organizations).

**Resources**

There have been a number of excellent media education texts written by Canadians since 1987. The more recent ones include the second edition of *Mass Media and Popular Culture* (Harcourt Brace, Canada, 1996) by Barry Duncan et al. And *Media Sense* (Harcourt Brace, Canada, 1998) by David Booth et al, which is in three parts - one for each of Grades 4, 5, and 6. Two other popular texts are Neil Andersen's *Media Works* (Oxford, 1989) for senior secondary students, and *Meet The Media* (Prentice Hall, 1990) by Jack Livesley et al. for middle school students.

Canadian classroom teachers are between a rock and a hard place with respect to Canada's copyright laws. While their Australian and American colleagues can tape video off air and rent videos at the corner store for use in the classroom, Canadian teachers must purchase videos at a price which includes a public performance license (about $150), and suffer a rather sparse choice for off-air taping. For example, professional sports broadcasts and sit-coms are not among those eligible for use in the classroom even though students find them very attractive and persuasive. There have been several innovations to this repressive legislation. At the suggestion of AML's John Pungente, The Media Awareness Network was formed to become a clearinghouse for educational resources. The Network has become extremely successful and comprehensive. As well as a large database of sample teaching materials from many
sources, both Canadian and international, the network has also developed some of its own resources, especially for helping children become media wise on the Internet (www.mnet.com). Some of these resources are available for downloading from the Net, and some are available on CD-ROM.

*Scanning Television* (Harcourt Brace, Canada) was another response to help teachers gain more access to authentic media messages. Forty short videos, mostly documentary, were culled by teachers from over a hundred items and copyright cleared for classroom use. The collection was designed mostly for secondary classrooms, and deals with all of the key media education issues identified in the Media Literacy Resource Guide. These have been collected on four video tapes and sold with a teachers’ guide. The collection has been very popular and successful in Canada, and has also sold in the United States and other countries.

Another boon for Canadian classroom teachers has been Cable in the Classroom. Although much younger than its American cousin, Canada’s Cable in the Classroom provides a very useful resource for teachers from its 35 cable network participants. Each Cable in the Classroom program has been copyright-cleared for classroom use for at least one year from the date of original broadcast. Teachers are welcome to tape the commercial-free shows, usually in the early morning, and screen them for their students on an as-needed basis. Many of the broadcasts are accompanied by teachers’ guides, which are often posted on the Internet. Because Media Literacy is mandated across Canada, there is a strong commitment on the part of some Cable in the Classroom participants to media-related programming, knowing that their programs will see utilization across the country.

Almost any of the Cable in the Classroom offerings can be used as media texts, but some are especially designed for media education. MuchMusic’s MuchMedia Lit series provides programs each month dealing with media education issues. Because MuchMusic also has a musical mandate, these programs combine music and social or marketing issues. Such a combination makes the programs highly attractive to adolescents, a further bonus for teachers looking for authentic texts. Recent programs have dealt with the impact of HIV on the families of victims, the sponsorship of musicians and concerts by cigarette and beer companies, and sexism and violence in music videos.

*Bravo!* Canada’s new style arts channel, began a new media literacy offering in 1997. *Scanning the Movies* examines a first-run theatrical feature each month, and provides a study guide on the Bravo! WebSite (www.bravo.com) Designed for both teachers and parents, the study guides facilitate deeper understanding of movies, movie making, and current issues. Especially useful media literacy programs from the last season include examinations of *Mad City* and *LA Confidential*.

Both MuchMusic and Bravo are operated by CHUM Television which also operates the national speciality channels SPACE, MuchMoreMusic, as well as the provincial CITY-TV. CHUM television works closely with media education and is very supportive of media education. CHUM is the first network - to the best of our knowledge - to appoint a full time director of media education - Sarah Crawford (sarahc@chumtv.com).
An ongoing concern about media violence and its effect on children gave rise to a Metro Toronto School Board publication, *Responding to Media Violence*. This book is designed to support Kindergarten to grade 6 teachers’ efforts to help their students make sense of influences of violent behaviors they may witness in the media, including cartoons, the news, and video games. Originally available only to Toronto teachers, *Responding to Media Violence* is now available through Pembroke Press in Markham, Ontario. Ontario students have access to a wide variety of newscasts, some customized exclusively for them. Studying these, and comparing them to newscasts designed for adult, Canadian and American audiences can help them understand the roles played by the media and themselves in informing and affecting social change.

YTV is a youth-oriented television network which presents a youth-centered news broadcast. There are also opportunities for viewers to submit their own video editorials for broadcast.

CBC Newsworld, an all-news cable network affiliated with the CBC national network, also provides a youth-oriented newscast, as well as Street Cents, a youth-centered consumer-awareness program. Canadian teachers are especially lucky have a growing wealth of media education support on the internet, on TV, and from the private sector. In fact, as educational funding diminishes, there is less government support for media education than there has been in the past. Marshall McLuhan said that people in the 20th century trying to understand media are like fish trying to understand water. Possibly those of us who benefit from the fresh eyes of youth find it easier, with their help, to see the water.

5: CONCLUSION

A study of media education around the world, shows that there are nine factors which appear to be crucial to the successful development of media education in secondary schools. These are:

1: Media literacy, like other innovative programs, must be a grassroots movement and teachers need to take a major initiative in lobbying for this.

2: Educational authorities must give clear support to such programs by mandating the teaching of media education within the curriculum, establishing guidelines and resource books, and by making certain that curricula are developed and that materials are available.

3: Faculties of Education must hire staff capable of training future teachers in this area. There should also be academic support from tertiary institutions in the writing of curricula and in sustained consultation.

4: In-service training at the school district level must be an integral part of program implementation.

5: School districts need consultants who have expertise in media literacy and who will establish communication networks.
6: Suitable textbooks and audio-visual material which are relevant to the country/area must be available.

7: A support organization must be established for the purposes of workshops, conferences, dissemination of newsletters and the development of curriculum units. Such a professional organization must cut across school boards and districts to involve a cross section of people interested in media literacy.
8: There must be appropriate evaluation instruments which are suitable for the unique quality of Media Studies.

9: Because media education involves such a diversity of skills and expertise, there must be a collaboration between teachers, parents, researchers and media professionals.

Australia, Scotland, and England, where many of the above factors are in place, lead the world in media literacy. Although Canada has not had the years of experience that Australia and Britain have, it is clear that Canada now possesses many of the factors critical to the successful development of media education.

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