Media and Information Literacy:

Challenges and Opportunities for the World of Education

Prepared for the Canadian Commission for UNESCO
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"Literacy is about more than reading or writing—it is about how we communicate in society. It is about social practices and relationships, about knowledge, language and culture. Those who use literacy take it for granted—but those who cannot use it are excluded from much communication in today's world. Indeed, it is the excluded who can best appreciate the notion of 'literacy as freedom'."

- UNESCO, Statement for the United Nations Literacy Decade, 2003 – 2012

Suggested reference texts and further reading:

UNESCO's media literacy initiatives: https://en.unesco.org/themes/media-and-information-literacy

Media education by province and territory: https://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/digital-and-media-literacy-outcomes-province-territory

United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals: https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/

Resources from the Canadian Commission for UNESCO:

- Dezinformatsiya: The Past, Present and Future of Fake News (2017) by Christopher Dornan.
- Navigate an Information Media Environment Awash in Manipulation, Falsehood, Hysteria, Vitriol, Hyper-Partisan Deceit and Pernicious Algorithms: A Guide for the Conscientious Citizenship (2019) by Christopher Dornan.
- Citizenship Challenges in the Digital Age: Youth Have Solutions
- Fighting "Fake News": How Youth Are Navigating Modern Misinformation and Propaganda Online

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Introduction: What is Media Literacy?

In the digital age, our knowledge and understanding of the world, as well as our participation in it, is inevitably shaped by the media and technology we turn to on a daily basis. For several decades, educators across Canada have embraced media literacy education as a way of helping students acquire the competencies they need for life and work in a media-saturated world. These competencies include the ability to access, search, analyze, and evaluate media content and information, and to use media and technologies to share information and to tell their own stories. Media literacy teaching and learning comprise explorations of three key areas: media production by both media industries and media users; media texts and networked environments or platforms, including how messages and information can be conveyed and shared; and media audiences by explaining how they can be targeted by, and how they actively respond to and use, media and technologies. Media literacy education is concerned with helping students develop an informed and critical understanding of all forms of media and related technologies, including their potential impact and use. For many educators, media literacy competencies are directly connected to democratic rights, active citizenship, and technological literacy. This paper will provide some background on global media literacy before focusing on media literacy in Canada and providing strategies for teaching media literacy in today's classroom.

In a recent survey, the majority of Canadian youth interviewed said they felt they didn't exist if they weren't online. Nearly 40% of these young people go to sleep with their smartphones. Forty-two percent of children under the age of 4 and 77% of youth between the ages of 14 and 15 have a smartphone. Parents and teachers believe digital technology can benefit children's learning, and 81% of parents agree that "it's important for my child's future that they think critically about how they use digital technology." Research also shows that many young people use social media for what they describe as positive political and social engagement. In a recent study, roughly one-third of students interviewed "posted comments on news sites or supported an activist group," in addition to posting artwork, stories, or videos for self-expression, and to remain "connected" to family and friends (MediaSmarts 2015, 2016).

Going Global – UNESCO and the Global Alliance for Partnerships on Media and Information Literacy

In an effort to support and advance ongoing work in education, and drawing upon the fields of both media literacy and information literacy, UNESCO recently developed the composite concept of media and information literacy: "Media and Information Literacy (MIL) recognizes the primary role of information and media in our everyday lives. It lies at the core of freedom of expression and information — since it empowers citizens to understand the functions of media and other information providers, to critically evaluate their content, and to make informed decisions as users and producer[s] of information and media content" (UNESCO, *Media and Information Literacy as a Composite Concept*).

UNESCO has taken a lead on the global stage through its efforts to support the work of such groups as educators, librarians, policy makers, and researchers around the world, and Canada has been a key partner in this international effort. One aspect of these efforts is publishing helpful resources and guidelines. For example, UNESCO's *Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers* was developed as a tool to explore media literacy competencies educators and students acquire. It also explores pedagogical strategies for integrating media literacy into classrooms at the elementary and secondary levels. Another UNESCO publication, *Media and Information Literacy Policy and Strategy Guidelines,* supports the development of media and information literacy policy as well as the implementation of media and information literacy programs in formal and non-formal settings, describing both the process and content to be considered.

Support for individuals and organizations has also been a priority for UNESCO. The UNESCO-initiated Global Alliance for Partnerships on Media and Information Literacy (GAPMIL) "is a ground-breaking effort to promote international cooperation to ensure that all citizens have access to media and information competencies" (UNESCO, GAPMIL). Organizations from over 100 countries have joined GAPMIL, creating a unified, global platform for media and information literacy initiatives and activities.

An annual Global Media and Information Literacy Week celebration and feature conference were created to celebrate progress toward the goal of "media and information literacy for all," and to provide opportunities to share the latest research, projects, challenges, and achievements with a diverse gathering of stakeholders involved in media and information literacy. Global Media and Information Literacy Week is celebrated around the world every year during the last week of October. GAPMIL AWARDS are presented during the feature conference to recognize innovative work in the field.

Media Literacy in Canada

The foundation for media literacy in Canada was firmly established in the late 1980s. As the majority of education is the responsibility of the provinces and territories, there has been, and continues to be, variation in content and methodology at the elementary and secondary levels. By 1987, media literacy was mandated in Ontario and, in subsequent years, was included in the curriculum of every province and territory across the country, most often as part of English or Language Arts Curriculum, Social Studies, or Communications Technology courses, and sometimes as a stand-alone course. Ontario was the first English-speaking jurisdiction in the world to mandate media literacy (Hoeschmann and Wilson, 2017).

Because of early achievements in policy and curriculum development and implementation, Canada was, and still is, regarded as an international leader in the field. In 1998, the Association for Media Literacy (AML) in Ontario was named "the most influential media literacy organization" by the World Council on Media Education. The *Media Literacy Resource Guide*, written by the AML and published by the Ministry of Education in Ontario, was a seminal resource document for educators around the world and has been translated into four languages.

The theoretical framework of the key concepts, first introduced in the *Media Literacy Resource Guide*, is still central to media and information literacy education today. Much of the work done in the field of media literacy, both nationally and internationally, is based on core principles adapted from the key concepts (see Annex B). These principles underpin curriculum and resources, as well as professional development opportunities for educators and policy makers. The key concepts and related principles are used to provide a common framework and language for analysis and production for teachers and students. The key concepts have been adapted and applied to all forms of media, as well as to media

"ecologies" or environments that are created as a result of today's networked technologies. These key concepts remain highly relevant today.

Key Concepts for Media Literacy

1. All media are constructions. This is arguably the most important concept. Media do not simply reflect external reality. Rather, they present carefully crafted constructions that reflect many decisions and are the result of many determining factors. Media literacy involves deconstructing these constructions (taking them apart to show how they are made). This is true for all media—print, analog, and digital—as well as networked and online platforms.

2. Media construct versions of reality. Media are responsible for the majority of the observations and experiences from which we build up our personal understandings of the world and how it works. Much of our view of reality is based on media messages that have been pre-constructed and have attitudes, interpretations, and conclusions already built in. Thus media, to a great extent, give us our sense of reality.

3. Audiences give meaning to media content. If media provides us with much of the material upon which we build our picture of reality, each of us finds or "negotiates" meaning according to individual factors: personal needs and anxieties, pleasures or troubles of the day, racial and sexual attitudes, family and cultural background, moral standpoint, and so forth.

4. Media have commercial implications. Media literacy aims to encourage awareness of how media are influenced by commercial considerations, and how these can impinge on content, production, and distribution. Most media production is a business and therefore must be profitable. Questions of ownership and control are central, particularly when a relatively small number of companies owns and controls the publications, networks, and platforms that provide news, information, and entertainment.

5. Media content contains ideological and value messages. All media products are examples of advertising that, in some sense, proclaim values and ways of life. Media convey, explicitly or implicitly, ideological messages about such issues as the virtue of consumerism, the role of women, unquestioning patriotism, and acceptance of the "other."

6. Media messages and content contain social and political implications. Media have great influence and can lead to political and social change. Media can have a significant impact on our response to events, such as civil rights demonstrations, refugee crises, and political campaigns. They give us an intimate sense of national issues and global concerns in such a way that we have become part of a "global village," a phrase coined by Canadian communication theorist Marshall McLuhan.

7. Form and content are closely related in media messages. As McLuhan noted, each medium has its own "grammar" and codifies reality in its own particular way. Different media will report the same event, but create different impressions and messages. McLuhan also emphasized the importance of examining the impact of media on existing "environments" as well as those that are created through our use of technologies, thus reminding us to pay attention to what a technology does, regardless of its content or intended purpose.

8. Each medium has a unique aesthetic form. Just as we notice the pleasing rhythms of certain pieces of poetry or prose, so should we be able to enjoy the pleasing forms and effects of different media.

(Media Literacy Resource Guide, 1989)

Challenges and Opportunities in the Media and Information Literacy Classroom

Across Canada, teachers are recognizing the need for a renewed focus and intentional approach to media literacy in classrooms and schools. Teachers know that students, in their lives outside the classroom, are already active in the digital world through phones, tablets, and computers. In an effort to connect classrooms to the world and address the need for digital literacy and digital citizenship, every province and territory has developed or adopted curricular frameworks to be used in schools. Teachers are making use of new technologies for professional development, and using social media platforms to share best practices, recommend resources, and engage in critical discussion and debate.

Although young people are immersed in a digital culture complete with a wide array of technologies and tools, many are not fully aware of the opportunities, limitations, and risks that can come from using these tools and lack the critical competencies that come through media literacy. Many current education initiatives that address student well-being, safe schools, and global citizenship include an emphasis on cyberbullying and a responsible use of media. Online safety, advertising and marketing through social media, and the authentication of online sources of information have also become important topics for investigation. In the media literacy tradition, teachers are careful to teach *through* new technologies and platforms and to teach *about* them and the information they provide.

In many classrooms, online production, communication, and collaboration are embraced, including opportunities for intercultural dialogues that expose students to new voices and perspectives. According to Valerie Steeves, "students who discuss issues and share their knowledge with others online are able to learn from each other and participate in the kinds of public debates that are central to lifelong learning and the exercise of democratic citizenship. The technology also makes that collaboration visible, so students can see their own contribution to the group. This enhances their sense of connectedness, which deepens and enriches their learning by making it both more personal and more social" (Steeves, 2012).

While there are examples of excellent work across the country, the development and convergence of new media and information technologies require ongoing professional development and continued opportunities for teachers to acquire and apply media literacy competencies in the classroom. The five areas below have been identified by teachers as having particular relevance and urgency for young people today and highlight the importance of a response rooted in the critical framework of media literacy. These areas are privacy, algorithms, representation, online radicalism and extremism, and fake news. The description of each area is followed by questions to consider that suggest a number of entry points for discussion and, as appropriate, can be applied to examples from media industries and corporations, as well as to examples of media produced by students.

Privacy

With so much of our lives existing online, we inevitably leave a trail of digital "footprints" that trace what we have been doing and when. Making purchases with a credit card, "liking" something on Facebook, sending out a tweet, and conducting an online search are examples of activities that, collectively, create a profile of information about individuals and their preferences. Mobile phones and the Internet of things— including networked toys and appliances—can operate as data collection and tracking devices. As a result of our activity online, pop-up ads appear on Google searches and promotional messages appear in our inboxes as data is collected, compiled, analyzed, and "monetized"—used to sell and promote products and ideas.

Websites aimed at children raise privacy concerns because they gather personal information in a number of ways. In some cases, in addition to logging onto a site, children are required to provide personal information to enter certain "exclusive" areas of the site or to participate in surveys and games. Many online worlds are designed to be "starter social networks," where children can connect and "socialize" with one another; create, upload, and share content; and, through their activity in these online worlds, share even more personal information (MediaSmarts, *Privacy Pirates,* 2015).

While concerns about privacy are often expressed, many people talk about the challenges of navigating, and making sense of, user agreements. Others express concerns about the inevitable "trade off"—having to give up aspects of privacy for convenience, and for the use of necessary tools and applications. Many young people have expressed concerns about protecting their online image or reputation, but do not always consider how data about their online behaviour is being collected and used (MediaSmarts, 2017). Media and information literacy can help teachers and students explore and understand the issue of privacy, including the benefits and risks of online activities.

Questions to consider:

- What does privacy mean in the digital age? What should the right to privacy include?
- What steps should individuals take to safeguard their privacy in their daily online activities?
- How can you alter your online behaviour to limit the collection of data and protect your online profile or reputation?
- Do children and adults have a right to know what personal information is collected, how it is collected, by whom, and for what purposes? How can they find out?
- What is the role of government and technology companies in protecting the right to privacy? For what purposes do they collect personal data? What are their responsibilities toward citizens in terms of the data they collect?
- What is the role of Internet regulation? Should government help decide what information can be collected, by whom, and for what purposes?
- When you examine the user agreements for various websites, smart toys, and applications, is it possible to understand clearly what data is being collected and how it is being used?
- What kind of supports do consumer advocacy organizations offer regarding privacy issues?

Algorithms

Increasingly, access to information is shaped by algorithms—a set of computational sequences, sometimes described as guidelines or instructions, that tell a computer what to do. Today, when people talk about algorithms, they are often referring to those that work with their social media feeds or their Internet searches. When someone begins a search or asks a question of a digital device, the algorithm responds to what has been asked and curates the information it provides. As we continue to make similar searches or requests, instead of repeating a set of instructions, computer systems will often "rewrite" or "customize" the related operations to decide what we see and how we see it. Over time, the results of the operations repeatedly show us our preferences and create a kind of "echo chamber" where we see the same thing over and over. This suggests something about the power of algorithms to shape our access to information, reinforce previously held beliefs, and influence our knowledge and understanding of the world.

Part of being media and information literate is developing an understanding of how algorithms operate, how they construct the information we receive, how they affect users. This allows us to understand what

the roles of the coder and programmer are in the creation process. It essential to be aware of the information we provide when undertaking a search, and the kinds of questions we ask. Lastly, we must understand that an algorithm needs all those data to function. As algorithms provide more sophisticated examples of artificial intelligence, critical classroom topics include issues of transparency regarding computer code and its capabilities, ethical design, and guidelines that maximize the benefits of artificial intelligence and minimize risk.
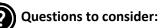
Questions to consider:

- How do you determine which search engine to use? Are there differences between the search engines that are available? What criteria do you use to evaluate the performance of each?
- What questions should you ask to determine the accuracy of the results that an Internet search provides?
- Consider what you are searching for. Is it an isolated fact—"what is…"— or an explanation for something—"why is…"? What are the important differences in these questions?
- How do you choose which social media platform to use? Are there software tools or services that provide you with alternatives to those offered by major technology companies?
- What data do you provide—intentionally or unintentionally—that could contribute to the way an algorithm works?
- What is the social context in which computer systems or algorithms operate? Is it one that could have prejudice or bias already built in? Why or why not?
- In what ways do algorithms "construct" or "mediate" the world for us? Are algorithms making our world "smaller," or could they connect us to the unknown or unfamiliar? Are there examples where both outcomes are possible?
- What media and information literacy competencies should a responsible "coder" possess?
- How can coding empower us?
- What kinds of skills are prioritized in many of the coding opportunities available to students? To what extent do these opportunities build media and information literacy skills?

Representation

Media and information literacy involves a critical analysis of media representations: the ways in which individuals, groups, places/communities, or news items are "re-presented" in various media. As always, critical analysis in media and information literacy requires that teachers and students explore how media representations "affect what we do, how we make meaning, how we relate to one another, how we think, and the kinds of people we can be" (Jones and Hafner, 2012). Media and information literacy also has a significant role to play in promoting dialogue, diversity, equity, and inclusion by creating and celebrating stories and perspectives that are often not part of mainstream media.

In many instances, representations that appear in media are based on stereotypes—oversimplified representations that emphasize difference. Because of this oversimplification, an audience is sometimes shown only a few characteristics that may not accurately or fully represent an issue, an individual, or a group. This kind of narrow focus can often prevent us from recognizing and understanding the richness and complexity that exist beyond media portrayals. In the multicultural landscape that is Canada, part of being media and information literate is being conscious of the ways in which media present the diversity of individuals, groups, and communities that make up the social and cultural fabric of our country*.*
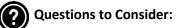
? Questions to consider:

- What representations of race, gender, or class exist in the media you use, or in the online spaces you visit? Would you describe these as stereotypical or diverse representations? How do the visuals or language used reinforce or break stereotypes?
- Typical representations of the "other" in media often fall into particular categories, including the exotic, the dangerous, the humorous, and the pitiful. How common are these representations today? Are there other categories that appear in media that aren't listed here?
- How are these media portrayals constructed? What are the technical elements (such as colour, scale, music, editing) that have been chosen? How do they reinforce content?
- What is the message that is conveyed through these representations? Who benefits if the message is accepted? Who loses?
- How easy is it to find examples from mainstream or alternative media that break or go against a stereotype and provide more complex portraits of an individual or group?
- To what extent are a variety of voices present in the media you use or create? Why might this be the case? What impact do the voices that are present have on particular audiences? What is the impact of the absence of certain voices?
- What factors do you consider when deciding how to "represent" yourself online or in your own media creations? How do you determine what factors are important?
- Describe the characteristics of a media platform that embeds the principles of diversity, inclusion, and fair representations of contemporary Canadian society. What are the potential uses and effects of such a platform?

Online Radicalisation and Extremism

Violent extremism refers to "the beliefs and actions of people who support or use ideologically-motivated violence to achieve radical ideological, religious or political views" (UNESCO, 2017). The views of violent extremists often target a number of issues, including politics, religion, and gender relations. These views are often exclusive and do not accept or recognize dissenting voices, nor do they allow for the possibility of diverse perspectives.

Research also shows that there is a number of socio-economic, psychological, and institutional factors that lead to violent extremism. "Push Factors" push or drive an individual toward violent extremism and include such factors as inequality, marginalization, and real or perceived persecution. "Pull Factors" pull or bring an individual into a group or "community" that fosters or promotes violent extremism by creating a sense of belonging, offering an outlet for complaints or protests, and providing opportunities for services or employment through some kind of membership (UNESCO, 2017).

The competencies that underpin media and information literacy involve critical analysis of media platforms and sources of information that can potentially contribute to online radicalization and extremism. For many young people, the Internet and social media provide access to "affinity groups" where they experience a sense of belonging and community. Part of being media and information literate involves evaluating the ideology and values that are reinforced and represented in these online spaces, identifying who the target audience is, examining how people are using these spaces, and asking who benefits as a result.

Questions to Consider:

- How do these online spaces bring people together? How would you describe the kinds of interactions that are possible? Are these interactions different from the ways in which you could come together offline? What kinds of social relationships are created through the site?
- What kind of communication or interaction is possible? One-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-many? What is the effect of this communication? What are the rules or norms for interaction? How do you learn these rules?
- What do you know about people in the network? What do they know about you? What information is revealed and what is hidden? Why is this the case?
- What values are promoted in this space? How can you tell? How are these values made visible? Is the space owned and controlled by an individual, organization, or corporation? How do you know?
- Who has access to the site? What is the "cost" or the method for joining a group or communicating in this space? What other opportunities for participation exist? How effective/accessible are these? Who benefits as a result of this participation?
- How does the space use text and visual elements to create and convey meaning? What are the key elements or ingredients that define or construct the space? What kind of "reality" or environment is created as a result?
- What tools does the site make use of for attracting the attention of others or for sharing information? What strategies are used for involving participants and engaging them in some kind of action? Who benefits from this kind of engagement? Who loses?
- How can you exercise your individual and collective agency to counteract online radicalisation and extremism?

Fake News

For some people, the term "fake news" has become part of everyday vocabulary when talking about media. The term itself suggests a straightforward definition involving false or misleading information presented as news. However, the use of the term is also more broadly applied as a criticism of the news industry itself, in an effort to discredit the work of reputable journalists and news agencies from around the world.

In today's media universe, there are many instances where examples of fact, fiction, entertainment, and advertising seem indistinguishable. In the world of social media, where messages and information can quickly become "viral," it is often difficult to address or prevent the spread of information that is false. Even in instances where journalists or fact checkers may correct inaccuracies, false or misleading information will often already have had an impact on unsuspecting audiences.

Across a variety of media platforms, stories or messages about events and their meaning can be shaped a number of ways. The vocabulary chosen for a headline or statement, the image that is cropped and selected for a home page or magazine cover, the people interviewed, and the quotes selected from their statements all contribute to the meaning that is created. Advances in artificial intelligence make it possible to create "deep fakes" where audio and video content is edited, synthesized, and manipulated to create convincing fictions.

Given this current reality, how can you determine what news can be trusted? How can you evaluate the work of news agencies and journalists? Media and information literacy provides students and teachers with a framework for understanding how the news media operate, for evaluating news reports and their sources, and for detecting bias and misinformation.

(?) Questions to Consider:

- What is the source of the information? Can the source be verified? Is it reliable? Who owns the media platform or information source?
- What is the main message? What facts are presented to support the main message? Is any information missing? What is the purpose of conveying this message? Who will gain if people accept the message? Who will lose?
- From whose perspective is the message presented? Does the message appeal to logic or emotion? To what effect?
- Who is quoted or given air time? How often? What names and titles are used and to whom do they apply? Can you verify these? Are there any incomplete quotations or comments taken out of context? Are all claims or conclusions supported by the facts presented?
- What words or images are used to describe or illustrate both sides of an issue? Look for the use of emotionally laden or vague terminology. What effect could emotional elements have on the message of the story and on audiences?
- Where is the information or story presented? How has it been distributed or shared? If it is a news report, where is the report located in relation to the rest of the news presented? How much time or space has the story been given?
- What is the context for the story? Is information about the context shared? What is the impact of the presence or absence of any context for the story?
- Does the platform or website allow for sharing different points of view? How do you know? What values and priorities for the site are conveyed as a result?
- Could you base an important decision on the information you have received? Explain why or why not with specific reasons to support your opinion.
- How do you determine whether or not to share or block information you receive? What are the factors you or others might consider?
- What is the difference between sharing information as an act of "transmission" by making a conscious decision to pass on information, and sharing information as an act of "ritual" by sharing regularly as a habit? What are the possible effects of each kind of sharing?
- Does the platform you are using provide any "incentives" for passing on information? How do you know this? What is the purpose of incentives? How might you decide to respond and why?
- How can you exercise your individual and collective influence to challenge examples of fake news?

Conclusion

Media occupy a powerful place in all of our lives and especially in the lives of young people today. Digital technologies make collaboration, communication, and participation possible on a scale we haven't seen before. What this means is that media and information literacy's importance is heightened, and our responsibilities as individuals committed to the field are even more significant. It remains essential for us to think critically about the purpose of media and information literacy—a larger purpose that can sometimes get lost in discussions of curriculum, policy, and new technologies. R.H. Jones and C.A. Hafner

raise important questions about literacy when they write, "Literacies are not things we develop just for the sake of developing them. We develop them to do certain things, become certain kinds of people, and create certain kinds of societies. And so the most basic, underlying questions governing [the] development of [media and information] literacies are: 'What do you want to do with them?', 'Who do you want to be?', and 'What kind of society do you want to live in?'" (Jones and Hafner, 2012). These are questions that will undoubtedly inform discussion and debate about the urgency and importance of media and information literacy, as ongoing developments in the digital age continue to have a profound impact on all aspects of life and work, and on classrooms and communities around the globe.

Annex A: Select Milestones in Canadian Media Literacy

1978 – Association for Media Literacy (AML) is founded

1986 – First curriculum guidelines that mandate media literacy are released in Ontario

1989 – The *Media Literacy Resource Guide* for teachers is published by the Ontario Ministry of Education

1990, 1992 – International media literacy conferences are organized by the AML in Guelph, Ontario

1992 – The Canadian Association of Media Education Organizations (CAMEO) is founded to support provincial media literacy associations modeled on the AML in Ontario

1996 – The Media Awareness Network (later MediaSmarts) is established

1998 – The World Council on Media Education named AML the "most influential media education organization" at the First World Congress on Media Education in Sao Paulo, Brazil

2000 – The world's largest media education conference, Summit 2000: Children, Youth and the Media: Beyond the Millennium, was held in Toronto with 1,500 delegates from 55 countries in attendance

2005 – AML President Carolyn Wilson receives Canada's Prime Minister's Award of Excellence for her work in media literacy and global education

2006 – First National Media Education Week (later known as Media Literacy Week)

2011 – Launch of the UNESCO/United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue (MILID) Network – Canada takes a leadership role

2013 – Launch of the Global Alliance on Partnerships for Media and Information Literacy in Abuja, Nigeria – Canada takes a leadership role

2016 – Launch of the North American Sub-Chapter of GAPMIL in London, Ontario

2018 – Jane Tallim and Cathy Wing, formerly of MediaSmarts, receive a GAPMIL Global MIL Award

2018 – Carolyn Wilson, Chair of GAPMIL, receives the Jesse McCanse Award for global leadership in the field of media literacy

Annex B: Core Principles for Media and Information Literacy

In the effort to promote media and information literacy, five core principles have emerged that highlight the work being done both in Canada and around the world, and that have applications to both present and future work in the field.

1. Media and information literacy is concerned with developing a critical understanding of how media operate, how they create meaning, how they can be used, and how to evaluate the information they present. Media and information literacy is concerned with promoting free, independent, and pluralistic media and information systems and environments.

2. Media and information literacy involves a critical understanding of the power of media representations—of issues, individuals, and communities—and the influence of these representations on the discourse of the day, and on how we see ourselves and others. Media and information literacy is about understanding the power of media to shape the way we respond to a refugee crisis or a natural disaster, the choice we make when we cast a ballot in an election, or the way we think about our very identity or existence.

3. Media and information literacy recognize the importance of self-expression, or "re-creating" the world, by providing people with opportunities to tell their own stories and actively engage with media using technologies available today. Through self-expression, media and information literacy supports technical competence, cultural, linguistic, and ethnic diversity, and human rights and dignity.

4. The acquisition of media and information literacy competencies is about empowerment and transformation. Media and information literacy has a significant role to play in promoting intercultural dialogue, social inclusion, and human fulfillment, and in enabling people to participate in the democratic processes of their societies.

5. Media and information literacy education promotes open, secure, and inclusive education and development across the world, and is central to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development goals.

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