



The National Association for Media Literacy Education's  
Journal of Media Literacy Education 1:2 (2010) 156-157

## Professional Resource: Project New Media Literacies (2005)

Maegan Stephens

*Department of Communication Studies, University of Texas, Austin, TX, USA*

Project New Media Literacies (NML) <http://newmedialiteracies.org/>

As new media increases in the public and education spheres, it is essential that our educators are able to both incorporate new media into the classroom and provide students with the tools needed to actively participate in the media creation and production processes. Project New Media Literacies (NML) (<http://newmedialiteracies.org/>), formerly of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and now housed at USC's Annenberg School of Communication, answers this call. Launched in 2005 with funding from the MacArthur Foundation (as part of the Digital Media and Learning Initiative,) NML incorporates strategies, lesson plans, blogs and more into their learning platform, with the hopes of creating a living document that is helpful to all educators, regardless of the subject matter.<sup>1</sup> At NML's core is the desire to "equip young people with the social skills and cultural competencies required to become full participants in an emergent media landscape and raise public understanding about what it means to be literate in a globally interconnected, multicultural world."<sup>2</sup> In other words, the project attempts to not only teach students how to analyze the media but also, how to *participate* in our new mediated world.

NML must be applauded in their request for a restructuring of the education system, with respect to media literacy education: "We believe that the New Media Literacies need to be integrated across the curriculum - not as an added-on subject, but as a paradigm shift in how we teach and think about traditional school content. Each discipline needs to take ownership of those skills which are central to doing research in their area."<sup>3</sup> New media is an integral part of both our society and the learning process; therefore, it is es-

sential that all disciplines shift their focus into one that not only includes new media elements in the classroom (e.g., using a YouTube video in a lecture), but one that recognizes the impact of new media on student learning and the potential for student participation in the media creation process.

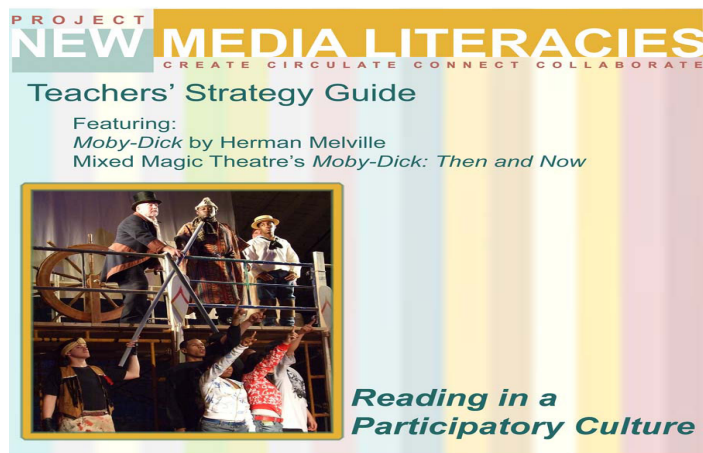
NML includes an almost overwhelming amount of information for educators and students alike. One would do well to first acquaint her/himself with the homepage and the research section, so to get a better idea about the project's goals (briefly explained above.) From there, much time could be dedicated in the Learning Library (<http://newmedialiteracies.org/library/>)—an interactive multimedia section complete with activities and artifacts for researchers, teachers, and students.



Visitors are encouraged to complete media challenges on an array of topics, such as fair use. The challenges are easy to navigate and highly interactive. Typical challenges include a textual description, visual and audio components, historical and timely cultural examples, as well as questions and/or an activity. NML leaves it up to the visitor to decide what to take away from the lesson. For example, while one teacher

might have the goal of becoming more familiar with the concepts associated with fair use, another may be looking for suggestions on how to teach fair use in the classroom. Different still, a student might choose to embed his/her own material into the fair use challenge for a class project. Site visitors are asked to leave comments and critiques throughout: creating an ongoing dialogue with all users. Overall, the Learning Library is well constructed, quite engaging, full of multiple activity formats, and is worth the time investment.

In addition to the Learning Library, the Teachers' Strategy Guide is the second major tool on the NML website (<http://newmedialiteracies.org/educators/>). Their first strategy guide, *Reading in a Participatory Culture*, tries to give suggestions for tools and techniques from Comparative Media Studies that can be applied in English and Literature classrooms. In operating under a participatory approach, Kelley and Jenkins (2009) urge that we "focus greater attention on what it means to be an author, what it means to be a reader, how the two processes are bound up together, and how authors exist in dialogue with both those who come before and those who follow them."<sup>4</sup>



Approaching a literary lesson plan in such a manner can lead students to learn in a less individualist, more community-based style. The study guide section is complete with numerous files available for download, covering concepts such as cultural space. In the appropriation and remixing download, for example, teacher's are given a step-by-step instruction guide complete with goals of the exercise, definitions and concepts, optional links, templates for students, videos to incorporate, and a section for notes and comments.<sup>5</sup> Each download includes a plethora of materials for

teachers and could be included as a whole or as possible suggestions that a teacher could choose from while designing a lesson plan.

The third major section of the website is NML Resources, which include a community site where visitors can create a username, invite friends, and participate in discussions with others interested in new media literacy. Next, a video collection link to MIT's Tech TV contains thousands of clips of such varied topics as engineering, global awareness, and education. The New Media Literacies section of the collection has over 100 videos, ranging from lecture clips to student projects. In addition to blogs and photos, there is an Ethics Casebook, complete with a link to another white paper that discusses digital media ethics.<sup>6</sup> Media ethics, as its own section, highlights the importance of this subject matter for teachers. Overall, NML Resources is a thoughtful addition to the already information-rich website.

Project New Media Literacies is an ideal resource for teachers who are interested in incorporating media literate lesson plans into any type of coursework, for researchers who are working in the realm of media literacy education, and for students who are participating in the ever-changing media world. The emphasis on participation on the part of students is highlighted throughout the website and outlined in detail in a white paper from Jenkins et al. (2006).<sup>7</sup> The participation goal is of great importance to media literacy education and overall, NML is an ambitious endeavor that delivers to visitors of its site.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See [http://digitallearning.macfound.org/site/c.enJLKQNI FiG/b.2029199/k.94AC/Latest\\_News.htm](http://digitallearning.macfound.org/site/c.enJLKQNI FiG/b.2029199/k.94AC/Latest_News.htm) for more information on the Initiative.

<sup>2</sup> Project New Media Literacies, <http://newmedialiteracies.org>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Wyn Kelley & Henry Jenkins, "Defining Reading: A (Sort of) Historical Perspective," Project New Media Literacies website, [http://newmedialiteracies.org/ExpertVoices\\_Revised.pdf](http://newmedialiteracies.org/ExpertVoices_Revised.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Project New Media Literacies, "Unit: Appropriation and Remixing," [http://newmedialiteracies.org/revised\\_Appropriation1108.pdf](http://newmedialiteracies.org/revised_Appropriation1108.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> For the white paper "Young People, Ethics, and the New Digital Media: A Synthesis from the Good Play Project," please go to <http://www.pz.harvard.edu/eBookstore/PDFs/Goodwork54.pdf>