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## Editor's Introduction

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Two years ago, the most powerful earthquake ever to have hit Japan occurred off the coast of Tohoku. Nearly a half million buildings fully or partially collapsed; widespread power outages and nuclear accidents occurred; and tens of thousands of people were injured and killed. Less than five percent of the damage was caused by the earthquake, however.<sup>1</sup> Most of the destruction was caused by the 130-foot tsunami waves that devastated the region and were felt across the world: The western United States sustained damage in coastal areas; nearly fifty square miles of ice broke away in Antarctica; Japan moved eight feet eastward; and the entire earth shifted upwards of ten inches on its axis.<sup>2</sup> That single act of nature was dreadful and awe-inspiring.

Prior to the 2011 Tohoku earthquake, I knew very little about tsunamis. I later learned that tsunamis are actually quite common and can occur through earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and even nuclear testing. Tsunamis that are hundreds of miles long can go unnoticed in the depths of the ocean, and it is only when a tsunami reaches shallower water near the shore that it grows in height and magnifies its capacity for destruction. Geophysicist Ross Stein commented: "We cannot predict earthquakes, and we cannot prevent them, but we can arm ourselves with information that helps us prepare for them and mitigate damage."<sup>3</sup>

My fascination with the geophysics of tsunamis brought me to one survival principle that can apply to everyone, regardless of socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, or culture: Move to higher ground. Just like natural tsunamis, the information tsunamis that wash our world generate varying magnitudes of fascination, awe, global concern, and even fear. For those of us in media literacy education (MLE), we can and should move to higher ground where pedagogy is systematic and learning-based. We can increase the methodological rigor of our research. We can seek research contexts

that are broad and deep to include homes, schools, and after school and community-based organizations. Higher ground is found where teachers, professors, artists, producers, administrators, community activists, parents, and professionals *intentionally* cultivate critical thinkers and creative producers of a wide variety of media forms. Seeking higher ground requires acknowledging the pitfalls of media and technologies while also embracing their infinite possibilities.

*JMLE* volume 5 issue 1 begins with a survey study of unsafe behavior among teenagers in online social networks conducted by Ellen Vanderhoven, Tammy Schellens, and Martin Valcke at Ghent University in Belgium ("Exploring the Usefulness of School Education about Risks on Social Network Sites"). The research reveals younger teenagers to have low levels for privacy care and unsafe behavior on social network sites. School emphasis was found to have a positive impact on privacy care which, in turn, positively influences teenagers' safe behavior on social networks. Yet schools provide little attention to raising awareness about privacy and security issues on social network sites. In increasing privacy care among teenagers, Vanderhoven, Schellens, and Valcke wisely caution educators against inducing fear in the process.

Hans Schmidt at Pennsylvania State University explores the extent to which media literacy competencies are addressed across all levels of the educational system ("Media Literacy Education in Primary, Secondary, and Post-Secondary Education") and presents some provocative data snapshots of the educational topography. Schmidt found no significant difference between student media literacy competencies among educators at different levels of the educational system; K-12 educators perceive less value in media literacy education than did educators at the post-secondary level; and older and more experienced faculty members teach about media literacy more often than younger and less experienced

faculty members. The study suggests that media literacy education is occurring in an interdisciplinary fashion.

Robin Jocius at Vanderbilt University delves into the intricacies of how students use digital media for academic purposes (“Exploring Adolescents’ Multimodal Responses to *The Kite Runner*”). The study is an interesting combination of the development of skills in literary analysis, media literacy, and multimodal composition. Jocius finds that despite student preferences, many students are not asked to engage in multimodal composition for academic purposes and issues a call for media and literacy educators to better understand the choices that students make when they use different modes to respond to literature.

The Voices From the Field section takes MLE praxis to new heights. David Cooper Moore at Temple University (“Bringing the World to School”) presents three case studies within the Powerful Voices for Kids program, incorporating news literacy in an elementary school. The importance of inquiry to guide lesson development alongside scaffolding students’ experiences while navigating the unpredictability of the classroom environment cannot be understated. Moore’s article is required reading for media literacy educators who desire to engage in best pedagogical practice, regardless of the learning environment.

Fernando Naiditch at Montclair State University intertwines media literacy, multicultural education, and teacher education (“A Media Literacy Approach to Developing Diversity Education”). Naiditch takes the reader on a thoughtful tour and reflective discussion of an undergraduate level diversity project assigned to his pre-service teachers that integrates NAMLE’s Core Principles of Media Literacy Education.<sup>4</sup> Naiditch offers a rich theoretical basis for scaffolding students’ online experiences in an effort to collectively increase their awareness, appreciation, and understanding of diversity in the public school classroom.

Jennifer Ann Rosales at University of Southern California provides an inside view of youth empowerment and participatory culture in a unique community-based setting (“Participatory Culture at the Echo Park Film Center”). Rosales paints a rich, qualitative portrait using programmatic design, pedagogical strategy, and participants’ voices. Rosales’ article further establishes the need for social and participatory spaces where youth can develop their voices through media production.

To round out this issue, professional resource review editor, Paul Mihailidis, has assembled three reviews that engage, inform, and inspire readers in the

areas of news literacy, game literacy, and geolocation.

*JMLE* volume 5 issue 1 signals a strengthening of the structural integrity of MLE research and praxis in the areas of privacy care, P-16 media literacy education, multimodal composition, inquiry-based learning, diversity education, and youth empowerment. The findings and reflections contained in this issue collectively herald the need for more systematic and visible media literacy education curriculum, instruction, and assessment across P-16 levels—and especially within teacher preparation programs.

I applaud these scholar-practitioners for engaging deeply in MLE within their schools and/or community-based settings. While the work is both necessary and rewarding, it is nonetheless difficult. To then publish such work within an academic journal is an added feat. I extend a special thanks to our editorial assistant, Michelle Thomas, who worked tirelessly to bring this content to *JMLE* readers in multiple formats. I invite you to explore this issue in html format on [namle.net](http://namle.net) where you can read and respond to the articles, essays, and reviews.

This June, I complete my elected term of office as NAMLE first vice president and rotate off the board of directors. I therefore take this official opportunity to express my personal awe and wonderment at the study and practice of media literacy education. My tsunami-like warning to “move to higher ground” is not a metaphorical urge for educators to get to safety. Rather, it is a prodding for all of us to climb higher to secure a wider vantage point of the wondrous landscape.

## Notes

1. Nyquist, Christine, “The March 11 Tohoku Earthquake, One Year Later. What Have We Learned?” March 19, 2012. United States Geological Survey. [http://www.usgs.gov/blogs/features/usgs\\_top\\_story/the-march-11-tohoku-earthquake-one-year-later-what-have-we-learned/](http://www.usgs.gov/blogs/features/usgs_top_story/the-march-11-tohoku-earthquake-one-year-later-what-have-we-learned/)
2. Chang, Kenneth. “Quake Moves Japan Closer to U.S. and Alters Earth’s Spin” March 13, 2011. *The New York Times*. [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/14/world/asia/14seismic.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/14/world/asia/14seismic.html?_r=0).
3. Nyquist 2012.
4. National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE). 2007. “Core Principles of Media Literacy Education” <http://namle.net/publications/core-principles/>