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Editor's Introduction

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When my colleague Amy Jensen passed the co-editor baton to me this past February, it prompted me to reflect upon the original goals of the *JMLe*. I witnessed the debut of the first issue at the 2009 National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) Conference in Detroit as both a contributing scholar and also as one of the newest members of the NAMLE Board of Directors. I recall Renee Hobbs' and Amy Jensen's bold vision of the *JMLe* as online, open-source, open-access and as a mechanism for scholars and practitioners to intelligently converse about MLE research, praxis and resources. Central to this discursive community were and remain NAMLE's "Core Principles of Media Literacy Education," (<http://namle.net/publications/core-principles/>) crafted just two years prior to the birth of the *JMLe*.

The diverse constituencies comprising MLE scholarship and practice fueled my interest and participation as Program Chair for the 2011 NAMLE Conference in Philadelphia. "Global Visions/Local Connections: Voices in Media Literacy Education" generated scholarship and practice currently featured in volume 4 issue 1 of the *JMLe*. Fast-forward to the forthcoming 2013 NAMLE Conference to be held in Los Angeles. "Intersections: Teaching and Learning Across Media" will cross traditional boundaries to explore the ways in which media technologies and the diverse structures of formal and informal learning evolve in collateral, convergent and sometimes conflicting ways. The 2013 NAMLE Conference will again provide multiple opportunities for MLE scholars and practitioners to revisit and revitalize the Core Principles of Media Literacy Education. Future issues of the *JMLe* will contextualize and capture this recursive development of the MLE landscape.

Additionally, Renee Hobbs and I have carefully assembled a new cadre of *JMLe* editorial board members who, like their predecessors, will bring innovation and

increased rigor to future developments of the journal itself. As co-editor, I hold fast to the baton of facilitating the growth and proliferation of MLE research and practice, especially fostering the development of young scholars who themselves are mapping the expansive terrain of MLE across disciplines while also honoring its rich and complex ancestry.

To these ends, I present to you volume 4 issue 2 of the *JMLe*, from which emerges three topographical features of the MLE landscape: enjoyment, engagement and empowerment. These bold threads interweave this eclectic pattern of Research Articles, Voices from the Field essays, and Professional Resource Reviews comprising this issue.

Research Articles

The conversation begins with Theresa Redmond's classroom-based study, "The Pedagogy of Critical Enjoyment: Teaching and Reaching the Hearts and Minds of Adolescent Students Through Media Literacy Education." Redmond moves beyond the protection, preparation and appreciation approaches and offers a purposeful case study of media literacy curriculum content and pedagogy within a public middle-school classroom. Through her descriptive and discursive data of teacher pedagogy and student engagement, Redmond arrives at the construct of *critical enjoyment* to denote the nuanced complexities of adolescent learning. She issues a resounding call for more research studies that are grounded "in descriptive school-based cases where collected data are representative of the rich contexts of daily classroom life" (116).

The exploration of classroom practice continues with Quinn Burke's "The Markings of a New Pencil: Introducing Programming-as-Writing in the Middle School Classroom." Burke's exploratory study investigates the "natural overlap between programming and writing through the storytelling motif," and "to

what extent existing language arts coursework and pedagogy can be leveraged to introduce this new form of digital composition to middle-school children” (121) Through rich, descriptive data, Burke moves beyond the technology integration to remind readers of the “practical and *creative* functionality” of algorithms and the reciprocal educational advantage of leveraging students’ traditional conception of writing onto new media platforms.

The focus on adolescent engagement with media messages continues with Joan Wharf Higgins’ and Deborah Begoray’s “Exploring the Borderlands between Media and Health: Conceptualizing ‘Critical Media Health Literacy.’” Expanding their research agenda in health literacy, Wharf Higgins and Begoray chart the health literacy terrain employing concept analysis of health literacy-related terms. They arrive at the construct of *critical media health literacy* (CMHL) and note that “a unifying idea might simplify and unite multi-disciplinary thinking.” The article systematically outlines the characteristics of CMHL, which include an acquired skill set, a sense of empowerment and a competency of engaged citizenship (141). Wharf Higgins and Begoray frame as the ultimate purpose of CMHL to empower individuals and groups to “exert control over their health and everyday events; and make healthy changes for themselves and their communities” (142).

We round out the Research Articles for this issue with a timely and timeless look at media narratives and teacher identity in “Media Narratives and Possibilities for Teachers’ Embodied Concepts of Self.” Jane Townsend and Patrick Ryan deepen our understanding of non-print media representations of teacher identity by analyzing past depictions of teachers in radio, television and film to question the shaping power of media narratives. This is more than an exercise in deconstruction, however. Townsend and Ryan remind the reader that “narratives furnish truths that are open to revision” (156) and call attention to the multiple opportunities to rewrite the narrative and redefine the image of teachers.

Voices from the Field

The trio of voices in this issue serendipitously hail from across the disciplines of communication, English and education—yet all within higher education. We start the conversation with Glen Hubbard’s reflective personal discovery of how constructivist teaching principles in a long-form video production course shaped his teaching practices and his understanding

of student learning. Hubbard delves into the MLE elements embedded throughout his course design (see table 1 on page 161) while exploring the many facets of constructivist teaching. Along the way, Hubbard humbly observes his successes and celebrates his challenges, while the reader is reminded of the necessity of project-based learning to media literacy education.

Along a similar vein, Jonathan Ostenson acknowledges the challenge of assessing multimedia student work in “Connecting Assessment and Instruction to Help Students Become More Critical Producers of Multimedia.” Ostenson aligns criteria and approaches from the fields of visual and film art with NAMLE’s Core Principles to deepen our understanding of assessment and instruction. Ostenson also offers the reader practical performance-based assessment rubrics for evaluating images, organization and audio elements that comprise student work.

Completing the trio of voices is Robin Fuxa’s “coming of age” philosophical journey in “What *Dirty Dancing* Taught Me About Media Literacy Education.” Fuxa reflects on the challenges of integrating MLE in the preparation of elementary and middle school teachers. Fuxa explores the assumptions of protectionism and rues its general ineffectiveness while contemplating the necessity of curricular integration of NAMLE’s Key Questions to catalyze critical interaction with media.

Professional Resource Reviews

Our Professional Resource Reviews editor, Paul Mihailidis, has assembled a diverse group of incisive critiques for this issue. They begin with David Cooper Moore’s penetrating analysis of *Rethinking Popular Culture and Media* (2011), a collection of essays from *Rethinking Schools* magazine edited by Elizabeth Marshall and Özlem Sensoy. Cooper Moore hones in on a problematic approach to the “ills of mass media” by authors who “rarely engage with digital or online media environments.” Cooper Moore underscores the “profound complexities of engaging with young people’s lived experiences with media” (186) and admonishes the contributing authors for attempting to “wish away” the empowering and/or harmful effects of mass media.

Equally incisive is Tom Hallaq’s review of *DIY Media: Creating, Sharing and Learning with New Technologies* (2010) edited by Michele Knobel and Colin Lankshear. Hallaq writes, “Providing a comprehensive text not only offering analysis and history of various media but also providing

introductory instruction on these media is a gigantic mountain to climb” (188). The editors “miss the mark in their attempt to provide a beginners guidebook for all things media,” yet Hallaq acknowledges Knobel and Lankshear’s ambitious volume at the same time collectively offers “many creative ideas for using media in the classroom” (188).

We switch gears from critical engagement to sheer enjoyment with William Costanzo’s review of *Horror and the Horror Film* (2012) by Bruce Kawin. Costanzo revels in the horror film as a “unique form of cinematic storytelling...embedded in the fabric of our culture” (190) and congratulates Kawin for undertaking “a ‘complete taxonomy’ of horror in order to show us what it is, how it works, why it compels use, and why we need it in our lives” (190). Aside from the spoilers (Kawin’s frequent disclosure of plot summaries) and often gruesome detail, Costanzo commends *Horror and the Horror Film* as a “valuable reference long after the first reading” (191).

Lastly, Julie Ann DeCesare meticulously dissects the web site ARKive: Images of Life on Earth (<http://www.archive.org>) as “an excellent resource for teachers, lecturers, librarians, students, and instructional technologists from the point of view of usability and content” (193). ARKive is a “publicly funded digital library focusing on endangered species and aimed at the general public as well as conservationists” (193). DeCesare’s review is a highly technical and deeply thoughtful examination that itself magnifies principles of MLE as it leads the reader through an exploration of authorship, ownership, construction and usability of ARKive.

Continuing the Conversation

To everyone who holds a stake in media literacy education, I invite you to lend your voices and perspectives to the conversation—particularly as they relate to the emergent themes of enjoyment, engagement and empowerment illustrated through this issue of the *JMLE*. Given the diversity of stakeholders comprising the field of MLE, it is understandable that we will occasionally experience philosophical, political and pedagogical clashes. Fortunately, deliberation and civil dissent are pillars of democratic practice. The *JMLE* blog is one site for enacting these principles of democracy while deepening and expanding the research and praxis of media literacy education.

You can participate by posting comments to individual articles on the *JMLE* blog and/or by

submitting your own manuscript for publication consideration or participate in the planning and implementation of the 2013 NAMLE Conference in Los Angeles (<http://namle.net/conference/>). There are multiple avenues for growing the field.

Lastly, I express my deepest gratitude to my editorial assistant, Samantha Zepeda, who rode the learning curve with me for our first issue of the *JMLE*. Her impeccable attention to detail and willingness to tolerate ambiguity will serve her well as she now moves on to greater heights as an educator. I wish her all the best.