emlr
european media literacy
on-line review

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editorial

Dear readers,

The ecml Conference on Media Skills and Competence in Tampere was held almost like a response to two major conferences at about the same time. UNESCO and the Club of Rome organized the World Conference on Information and Communication Technologies for Capacity-Building in Paris which emphasized the new learning culture and communication competence, e-literacy skills for all, and empowerment of local communities.
The European Commission organized a pan-European conference on eLearning in Brussels which brought together over 500 representatives from the education, training, employment, industry and ICT sectors to share experiences. One of the major conclusions of this conference was that digital literacy is a fundamental element of the knowledge society. Ensuring that everyone has the necessary skills, competences, experiences and attitudes to make effective use of ICT is probably the biggest challenge of all.

In her keynote on media literacy as core civic competence at the ecml Conference on Media Skills and Competence in Tampere Dr. Liss Jeffrey reminded the audience of Toffler's definition that the illiterates of the 21st century are not those who cannot read and write but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn. In her McLuhanist approach education is the best civil defence against media fall out.

Digital literacy issues and media competence were discussed from many theoretical and practical viewpoints and from different cultural approaches of the world. The sessions also included the Global University System interactive multicasting videoconferencing jointly with the occasion of the conference "Knowledge Society Challenges for e-Learning" at the Kaunas University of Technology in Lithuania. Presentations were held from Tampere, New York, Kaunas, Houston, and Taganrog. The significance of this event was that anyone around the world could receive high quality video/audio anywhere, if they had broadband Internet without much difficulties and costs.

The nature of knowledge and the role of communication in society were discussed in the context of literacy. When addressing the conference, Mr. Kristian Slotte, Director General for International Relations of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in Finland, said that the most important skills of the future would be communication skills. Today everyone is able to access vast amounts of data without a mediator. Therefore, as was

stressed by Mr. Slotte, critical thinking skills are needed as a productive and positive activity. Critical thinkers see the future as open and malleable, not as closed and fixed. They are aware of the diversity of values, behaviours, social structures, and artistic forms in the world. Critical thinking is a process, not an outcome, and it is emotive as well as rational.

Digital literacy was also discussed as a way of thinking, as an element of new humanism and new renaissance education. Already in 1923 Albert Schweitzer wrote about the tragedy of the Western world-view. In his view our philosophy did nothing more than produce again and again unstable fragments of the serviceable outlook on life which hovered before its mind's eye. Consequently even our civilization remained fragmentary and insecure. Our philosophising became less and less elemental, losing all connection with the elementary questions which man must ask of life and the world.

Therefore, the demand of a new renaissance education has emerged in Europe. It would combine science and technology with the art, humanities and religion reflecting the diversity and traditions of Europe in order to develop meaningful dialogue and cultural literacy with other civilizations. Media skills and competences are fundamental elements of life and empowerment in the knowledge society.

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news

A two-day trip starting from Finland, going through Austria, Italy and straight to India, Japan, Canada

The ecml consortium was very proud to present the results of the cooperation and its plans for further dissemination of media literacy topics and discussions on the above mentioned Conference in Finland.
The starting point was of course the overview on the results of ecml project, which made the event possible and grouped together partners from Finland, Austria and Italy. The State of the Art in Media Literacy was discussed for the EU countries as well as for the U.S., Canada, Australia and Latin America. A wide range of examples were given for the Guidelines for Media Literacy in Education to show how theory can be put into practice.
All services provided by the European Centre for Media Literacy – such as the content repository (a database and search tool for retrieving material on the topic), this newsletter and the online community – were presented emphasizing their functional aspect and accessibility.
During the **international session** at the Media Skills and Competence Conference several experts raised and discussed issues related to media and digital literacy. The first day **K.S. Sitaram** from the U.S.A. discussed the non-western and more precisely South Asian theories of speech and communication, whereas **Liss Jeffrey** from the University of Toronto broadened the horizons of the audience by presenting the concept of media ecology.
The first went through the roots of Hindi and Buddhist philosophies to show the relation that still exists with media today and the challenges that the public has to face: it is important to go beyond what meets the eye to catch a glimpse of the message that lies behind media, „do not try to know the speech, know the speaker" was the message that Prof. Sitaram wanted to spread, popularising ancient knowledge without stereotypes and ethnocentristical views.
Dr. Jeffrey stressed the importance of „learning a living", that is to acquire flexible competencies in complex adaptive systems – in other words: adapt to a constantly changing digital environment without depending on the technological tools that surround us. The role of media users is also to understand that they have civic responsibilities that

can be exploited through the use of digital means, and so media literacies (or mediacies as she likes to call them) are closely related to civic literacies, the competences to participate in public spheres.

This aspect came out the second day, when several projects developed in the last year showed how people are willing to create a better place to live. For example, **Sirkku Kotilainen** presented the social actions of young people in Finland and it came out that girls are deeply involved in such initiatives and local projects have had a discreet success, in order to advance rights and services for citizens and improve the situation of the whole city.
The concept of Literacy and Responsibility was approached by **Antti Syvänen** and **Niklas Vainio** who presented media literacy from a more technological point of view. One of their research outcomes was that mobile media can be considered as a tool for civic participation and also of entertainment. The risk lies in a fragmentation of knowledge as the user gets more and more distracted by the amount of information received.

In such an overwhelming digital world, the keynote speaker **Paul Lefrere** from Microsoft introduced the concept of identity and the profile of the "Homo Zapiens", who bases his knowledge on the new generation movies and cartoons like "The Matrix" and "South Park". What lies behind a satire on the Internet? How should we interpret media literacy and change? During the presentation, the adaptation command came out, where Lefrere summarized this concept in three progressive actions: making sense of change, adapting to change and then shaping change. This completes the concept that Dr. Jeffrey approached through the explanation of learning a living: "It's not the tool that makes the rule", where people must not be passive users but active and effective. This same idea opened Syvänen/Vainio's presentation, where media literacy must be seen as going towards people as ACTIVE users of media.

In the same session **Diana Petkova** started from Huizinga's theory of Homo Ludens to show how people tend to play the game of identities on the Internet. She also defined the thin line that divides child's play from adult's play: for children is instinctive, whereas for adults is a pleasure, a way to entertain and create. Following the same path of identity and play, the world of virtual communities found its space in the presentation of **Michelle Pieri** who explained how these digital environments develop along with their inner characteristics, the special language and behaviour of participants, almost like a role-playing game.
There was also space for an overview on the development of media education at school. **Ruth Lemmen** presented her research on the main aspects of film and media education in Europe, with its pros and cons and suggested to further intensify collaboration on European level; **Cathy Poole** presented a successful project that introduced cine-literacy at school in the UK, in order to show the reactions of young learners towards one of the media par excellence: the movie. In Finland, **Heljä Franssila** approached the subject from a more critical point of view by presenting the weak points of the introduction of media literacy at school: is the ICT in schools effective for the development of this subject? Is there a way to make media education affordable on a national scale rather than locally?
Media literacy gained its way also through Japan, where **Keiso Katsura** explained how the rich infrastructure surpasses people's improvements in the use of technology, a tendency almost opposite to that in Europe. The main barriers to media literacy in Japan are communication patterns, educational system, a mobile centred use of ICT and the computer science hegemony. To close the session and the conference, **Maria Silveirinha** presented the reaction of Portuguese press to the introduction of the Euro: media at a historical turning point for EU.
(Claudia Alborghetti, UCSC)

Finnish practices: northern lights in media literacy

The Finnish track at the bilingual Media Skills and Competence conference included topics ranging from computer education to the contemplation of news, commercials and games, and to the distinction between facts and fiction among adults and adolescents.

The first session, chaired by **Heljä Franssila** and **Marika Pehkonen** from the Hypermedia Laboratory at the University of Tampere, began with glances to the abilities and difficulties of people to make good use of modern information technology. First, Project Coordinator **Elina Harju** told about Netti-Nysse, the Internet Bus linked to the local information society program e-Tampere and maintained by the Tampere City Library. Netti-Nysse is an old city bus that was transformed to carry computer-teaching facilities. It brings the technology to the people and offers basic computer education free of charge. The approach is relaxed and human-oriented, as the instructors strive for intelligible language. The clients are often elderly or other people with little or no experience of computers, and they may have low self-esteem as learners, so it is important that the guidance is personal and encouraging. From a tutor's point of view, Harju criticised the modern computers, for example the keyboards, for still being too cumbersome and unintuitive even for a fairly experienced user. (More information about Netti-Nysse is available at http://www.tampere.fi/kirjasto/nettinysse/english.htm).

Minna Vikman, the e-teaching coordinator of the city of Tampere, told about how computers are being implemented in the local comprehensive schools. The city has stated that every child has the right to take advantage of information technology for learning. This goal cannot be achieved merely through separate projects but the process must have a solid strategy as its base. Therefore, the planning is persistent and the realisation slow. There are many factors to be taken into consideration: the equipment has to be wired up, the syllabus modified, the school culture taken into account, and the teachers need to be retrained. It was pointed out, for example, that the teachers might be reluctant to start utilising computers in the class because they feel insecure, as many students seem to know the new technologies better. However, children's computer skills are often rather narrow: they may master certain entertainment services very well, but at the same time have difficulties with more practical applications.

After the discussion about computer utilisation, the focus turned on broadcasters and news services. Media Researcher **Katja Valaskivi** of Pro Yleisö (Pro Audience), a non-profit association that promotes variety and quality in television and radio, compared the Finnish and Japanese media with each other. She told that when she had recently returned to Finland after having worked several years at the Finnish Institute in Japan, she had experienced a cultural shock. She had felt that the Finnish media had become overwhelmed with sex and violence and negative attitudes. According to Valaskivi, it is common for both the Finnish and Japanese news journalism to create an illusion of neutrality, but whereas in Japan the media try to be constructive at a time of a major crisis, in Finland there is a tendency to find someone to blame as soon as a crisis breaks out. The agenda has been handed out to the tabloids, the standpoint is often parochial, and the stories take advantage of the public's animal instincts. Valaskivi demanded a more responsible approach from the broadcasters and producers.

Valaskivi's somewhat provocative talk was followed by a news producer's point of view, as Managing Editor **Rami Niittysalo** of MTV3, the largest commercial television company in Finland, told about editing news for interactive media. However, Niittysalo took the ethics of news journalism for granted and concentrated on the special nature of the alternative channels for news transmission, such as the Internet, WAP phones, SMS news, and teletext. According to Niittysalo, the journalistic principles will remain the same even if quickness and flexibility are emphasised. Especially the Internet allows also more extensive or focused background stories, which would not get airtime on the traditional news broadcasts.

Concerns about the quality of media and especially the question about the excess of sex

were recontemplated on the second session of the day when **Susanna Paasonen**, a researcher from the Centre for Women's Studies at the University of Turku, talked about how pornographic images have become a part of everyday media experience. Especially commercials often echo gestures and postures typical for pornography. The images of half-naked women have also aroused objection, as they have been conceived as a form of cultural harassment. According to Paasonen, it is typical that the criticism is based on simplified causal relations and that the critics are not concerned of the effects that the media may have on themselves, but rather on someone else, especially the children. However, a media literate should understand that media affects everybody, and she should have the ability to analyse the stories and backgrounds connected with the images. This need not lead to cynicism, as the stories can still be enjoyed as stories.

University Lecturer **Leena-Maija Rossi** from the Christina Institute for Women's Studies at the University of Helsinki continued the discussion by asking what's the point of studying something as obvious and banal as commercials. She answered the question herself by stating that the commercials do not merely reflect the real life, but they are involved in it on many levels. In addition to the aspired and obvious effects on buying decisions, the commercials add to the common cultural image arsenal and affect people's self-concept. When the commercials depict people, they always forge gender roles, usually reinforcing the prevailing heterosexual models. On the other hand, although people reproduce gender and sexuality all the time in their everyday life by acting according to norms associated to gender, they also tend to modify the models. Even commercials may sometimes break the traditional models, or people may read them "the wrong way", intentionally questioning the obvious.

After having treated computer education, news journalism, and commercials, the attention turned to entertainment and, specifically, games. Research Director **Frans Mäyrä** from the Hypermedia Laboratory at the University of Tampere joined with **Jyrki Kasvi**, a member of the Finnish Parliament, to discuss about games literacy. They stated that computer games have become more and more popular, not only among children but also among adults. However, as the academic research and critical understanding of games and gaming are just emerging, there are still a lot of prejudices against computer games. For example, when an adolescent commits an act of extreme violence, games are often blamed for having given violent impulses to the offender. Especially the active role of a player, compared with the relative passivity of somebody who is watching a movie or reading a book, is perceived to indicate that the player empathises more strongly with imaginary violence. Nevertheless, in recent interview studies the gamers have expressed that actually they tend to identify closer with a character of a movie or a book than with a game character. The appeal of games seems to be based rather on intellectual problem solving or motoric challenge than on emotional identification. Parents and teachers were also encouraged to familiarise themselves with the games the children are playing, as that would reduce the generation gap.
(Simo Kaupinmäki, UTA)

Knowledge, experience and issues that go through the evolving field of media literacy need to be constantly studied and developed – we saw on the first day, that the Media Skills and Competence conference paved the way to such exchange.

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news III

Special event: grouping together adults and adolescents with media

On the second day of the conference, the Finnish track was formed of a workshop where adults and adolescents together traced the border between facts and fiction. The conference participants were invited to work with groups of school children from 7th grade. The workshop was coordinated by Special Education Teacher **Jukka Haveri** of the city of Tampere and Project Manager **Mika Kantola** from Hämeenlinna Media Centre.

For the adults, the day started with an introductory lecture by Professor **Mikko Lehtonen** from the Department of Literature and the Arts at the University of Tampere. According to Lehtonen, there is a strong tradition in Finland of separating facts and fiction from each other, reckoning without that even fiction may sometimes spawn very real effects. Today especially the so-called reality television programmes tend to obscure the border between the factual and the fictive, and this drives people to learn new ways of reading the media. In order to analyse the change, Lehtonen and his colleagues are building a framework that categorises communication according to who speaks to whom on which forum, what is the topic, and how the addressees regard the discourse.

In the workshop, the task was to plan and prepare a fictional news story or a commercial, for example. There were video equipment and technical assistance available for making the final product, but the emphasis was on the work processes and group dynamics, not on the end results. Topical themes were ideated collectively and five of them were chosen, one for each group to elaborate. The themes were about the trustworthiness of an e-friend, the choice between a good story and a dull fact, the fear of gaming, the reality television, and a kangaroo in Tampere (during the week, the local media had buzzed about sightings of a strange animal resembling a kangaroo).
Originally, it had been planned that mixed groups including both adults and adolescents would offer a fertile ground for working. Unfortunately, only a handful of adults attended the workshop, and even most of them had to leave early when the actual group work was just starting. Therefore, the scheme was changed and the groups were formed solely of children. The remaining adults were free to circulate from group to group, watching and partaking in the discussions as they saw fit. This gave the adults a chance to a more diverse view of the work processes, but at the same time exposed them to detachment. Nevertheless, there emerged a couple of lively discussions between adults and children, so at least partly the altered scheme appeared to suffice.
The children had practised media skills with Haveri earlier, and they came quickly to grips with the task. Most of the groups ended up doing interviews with their classmates or some of the adults or even with strangers found on the University campus. One group created a charming mini-drama. Generally, the children took a critical view of their themes although, naturally, they lacked historical and cultural perspective. Nevertheless, the seeds of media literacy appeared well sowed.
(Simo Kaupinmäki, UTA)

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news IV

Keywords: community, experts, laymen, join!

We would also like to inform you that **we have launched the online community for discussions on ecml topics.**
The community of practice has been created for all those who wish to share their experience as teachers or educators in the field of media literacy and it uses the support of the European Schoolnet (EUN).
As an entry point you can use the link on the project homepage www.ecml-eu.org or go directly to http://community.eun.org/entry_page.cfm?area=1794. Come and join the community even if you are a layman, there is always room for questions and comments on such a complex subject like media literacy! We would be happy to have the opportunity to start interactive discussions with you and to learn about your opinion on the issue.

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articles

Does media education come in pink and blue?

Media create reality and powerfully shape our values and the perception of women's and men's roles in economic, social and cultural spheres. A number of studies is concerned with the negative or passive representation of women – e.g. in advertising campaigns. The

audience's preference of media can also be researched from the gender point of view as well as there are also 'gendered' professional skills in the media sector and the employment of women in decision-making and senior professions in broadcasting and print media is still disproportionally low.

Gender and media is therefore an interesting and important topic in the media literacy research: it includes the representation of women and men in TV, film and advertising, the use of media – internet, computer games, and many others – by girls and women and also the role of women and men in media production. We want to start a discussion on the topic also in our <u>online community</u> and present a few articles on the topic as a starting point.

Television and the Perpetuation of Gender-Role Stereotypes
by Nancy Signorielli
In her article Nancy Signorielli describes how men and women are represented in TV series.
http://www.aap.org/advocacy/sign298.htm

Killing Like a Girl: Gendered Gaming and Girl Gamers' Visibility
by Joe Bryce and Jason Rutter
Girls and women are increasingly becoming computer gamers. The paper examines the relationship between gender and (female) gaming. Computer gaming may have the potential to challenge dominant stereotypes. More on:
http://www.digiplay.org.uk/media/cgdc.pdf

Deadly Persuasion – why women and girls must fight the addictive power of advertising
Interview with Jean Kilbourne
The European Schoolnet published an interview with Jean Kilbourne concerning the effect of advertising on the body image of girls and women. By promoting a wrong ideal of beauty advertising can be 'deadly' for women. Jean Kilbourne is an expert when it comes to the image of women in advertising, here is what she has to say:
http://www.eun.org/eun.org2/eun/en/vs-media/content.cfm?lang=en&ov=9081

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media literacy organisation of the month

international network for gender media watchdogs

The media watchdogs network is a network of national organisations all over the world promoting fair portrayals of both men and women in the media. Starting from this site you can check out the national pages of the organisations containing country relevant information:
http://www.mediawatchdogs.org/

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events calendar

EDEN - European Distance and E-Learning Network
June 20-23, 2005
Helsinki (Finland)
The EDEN 2005 conference will focus on open, distance and e-learning from the perspective of lifelong learning, with the approach of collaboration and knowledge transfer from all educational sectors, including adult and vocational education. The event will especially address the transversal and intersectoral issues, in particular the role of universities, as well as post-secondary and tertiary further education.
http://www.eden-online.org

new Microlearning 2005
June 23 - 24, 2005
Innsbruck (Austria)
The conference focuses on Microlearning as offering key answers: learning in small units, developing flexible designs, designing mediated environments and integrating different learning models are seen to optimize the use of technologies for learners. Exploring Microlearning as a cutting edge option, this conference aims at bringing different aspects and approaches into focus: mobile and the Web, didactics and learning technologies, corporate learning and academia, e-learning and semantic web, ICT and new media cultures.
http://www.microlearning.org/

new Geschlechtergerechtigkeit und Medienkompetenz
June 24 – 25, 2005
Karlsruhe (Germany)
Educators and researchers from different disciplines exchange and develop theoretical and empirical know-how on the topic of gender – education – new media.
http://www.kompetenzgbi.de/index.php?id=163

National Media Education Conference 2005
June 25-28, 2005
San Francisco, CA (US)
The Alliance for a Media Literate America (AMLA) is committed to promoting media literacy education that is focused on critical inquiry, learning, and skill-building. This national, grassroots membership organization will be a key force in bringing media literacy education to all 60 million students in the United States, their parents, their teachers, and others who care about youth.
http://amlainfo.org/

ED-Media 2005
June 27- July 2, 2005
Montreal (Canada)
World Conference on Educational Multimedia, Hypermedia and Telecommunications
http://www.aace.org/conf/edmedia/call.htm

new Childhoods 2005 Oslo: Children and Youth in Emerging and Transforming Societies
June 29-July 3, 2004
Oslo (Norway)
The purpose of this conference is to approach the world of modern childhood and youth, where social issues and globalisation create a whole new way of living for young generations of people. The relation of adolescents with media will also be discussed.
http://childhoods2005.uio.no/

new Cartoon Club - International Festival of Animated Cinema and Comics
July 1-30 2005
Rimini (Italy)
Cartoons, theatre, shows and creative workshops for children and families. Experience media through creation; meet the authors, share points of view.
http://www.cartoonclub-rimini.com/

new Screen
July 1-3 2005
Glasgow, Scotland (United Kingdom)
The 15th annual international conference organised by the renowned academic Screen Studies Journal on research in film and television at Glasgow University.
http://www.screen.arts.gla.ac.uk

new Wikimania 2005
August 4-8, 2005
Frankfurt am Main (Germany)
Studies and experiments on Wikipedia and other projects operated by the Wikimedia Foundation, on wiki culture and technology, and on the world of free knowledge will be presented.
http://wikimania.wikimedia.org/wiki/

new Women in Games
August 8-10, 2005
Dundee (UK)
The conference highlights the most recent, groundbreaking work in computer game research and developments and the empowerment and professional development for women working in and researching into games and the games industry.
http://www.womeningames.com/

new Cybercultures: Exploring Critical Issues
August 11-13 2005
Prague (Czech Republic)
This inter- and multi-disciplinary conference aims to examine, explore and critically engage with the issues and implications created by the growth of cybercultures and the continuing emergence of new media for human living and culture.
http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/ci/cybercultures/c3/cfp.htm

new Digital media and gender in a Nordic context
August 19, 2005
Karlstad (Sweden)
This conference provides a forum for exploring the connections between digital media, gender studies, and 'Nordicness'.

new ICL 2005
September 28-30, 2005
Villach (Austria)
This interdisciplinary conference aims to focus on the exchange of relevant trends and research results as well as the presentation of practical experiences gained while developing and testing elements of interactive computer aided learning. Therefore pilot projects, applications and products will also be welcome.
http://www.icl-conference.org

new 5. Jahrestagung der Österr. Gesellschaft für Forschung und Entwicklung im Bildungswesen
September 29-October 1, 2005
Linz (Austria)
The orientation of education on competences which are directly related to practical applicability and relevance is going to be questioned in this symposium.
http://www.oefeb.at/

new Graduate Conference: Shades of Sexuality in Film; Exploring the Aberrant, the Normal and the Space Between
September 30 2005 - October 1 2005
San Francisco, California (United States)
This graduate conference will focus on the evolving depiction of sexuality in film and digital media. It aims to examine the history of sexuality's manifestation on film.
http://www.sffilmconference.com

new Girls today women tomorrow
Donostia-San Sebastián (Spain)
November 8-9, 2005
This conference will analyze how gender affects the construction of identity from different spheres such as the family, the media and from the point of view of affecivity.
http://www.sare-emakunde.com

YOUKI 2005
November 21-25, 2005
Wels (Austria)
7th International Youth Media Festival
http://www.youki.at/