Web Sites on Literacies for 21st-Century Learning

by Greg Byerly

Literacy—the learned ability to read and write—once meant that a person was educated and able to function in the world. While reading and writing remain essential in the 21st Century, technology now has made other literacies equally important. These other literacies include Information Literacy, Media Literacy, and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Literacy. Unfortunately, from an educational perspective, these three complementary literacies have been developed by different groups of educators.

School librarians and K-12 teachers are generally most familiar with Information Literacy. The need for Information Literacy became evident as more and more students switched from print to electronic and Web-based resources and were unable to effectively find, use, and evaluate information using these new technologies. Media Literacy developed, both within and outside of education, as concerns arose about the ability of young people to evaluate the media messages being presented in advertising, through television and movies,

and during their daily use of the Internet and the Web. ICT Literacy came more from issues related to the availability of the technology needed to function in the 21st Century and on how to ensure that students have the skills necessary to use these new technologies.

In the second decade of the 21st Century, K-12 educators must incorporate the principles and skills of all three of these new literacies into their classrooms. It is no longer sufficient for school librarians to worry about information literacy, for network specialists to promote ICT literacy, and for journalism or communication educators to stress the need for media literacy. Fortunately, all three literacies are found on a wide variety of excellent Web sites, many from professional organizations formed to promote a specific literacy.

Finally, it is also important to link these new literacies with 21st-

Century learning skills. The Web site of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21) is a good source (http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/index.php). All three literacies are prominently included in P21 which, in turn, correlates to the *Standards for 21st-Century Learners* developed by the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) in 2007 (http://www.ala.org/aasl/standards).

Information Literacy

Information literacy is perhaps the best known of the three literacies and is actively promoted by school librarians and teachers. The following Web sites provide information about and links to some of the best. If you are not familiar with them or if you simply want to further explore information literacy, please check these sites. However, only brief annotations are provided.

Project Information Literacy
http://projectinfolit.org/

Subtitled "a large-scale study about early adults and their research habits," Project Information Literacy is a "national study about early adults and their information-seeking behaviors, competencies, and the challenges they face when conducting research in the digital age." It is being conducted by the University of Washington's iSchool. The project is conducting ongoing national surveys of information seeking behavior, and current findings are reported on the Web site.

ACRL Information Literacy

http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/issues/infolit/index.cfm

This is the information literacy Web site of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) of the American Library Association (ALA). Along with ALA's American Association of School Librarians, ACRL has been a major player establishing standards for and promoting information literacy instruction. This Web site provides links to extensive resources on information literacy with an emphasis on higher education.

American Association of School Librarians (Information Literacy)

http://www.ala.org/ala/aasl

This link takes you to the Web site of the American Association of School Librarians (AASL). Click on Guidelines and Standards to find the most current information related to information literacy. AASL has developed information literacy standards that include multiple literacies (digital visual, textual, and technological). If you are unfamiliar with AASL resources such as *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner* or *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner in Action*, this Web site has information you need.

TRAILS: Tool for Real-time Assessment of Information Literacy Skills

http://www.trails-9.org/

TRAILS is a free online tool that can be used by teachers to assess the information skills of their students. It has been used in every state and many foreign countries. It currently offers tests based on sixth-and ninth-grade standards. However, a third-grade assessment will be available in 2010. TRAILS was developed at Kent State University as part of the Institute for Library and Information Literacy Education (ILILE), which was a federally funded initiative of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).
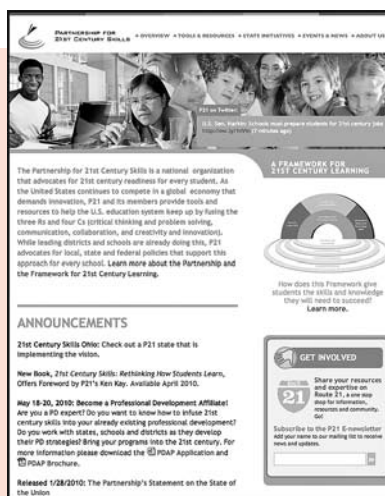
ICT Literacy

ICT Digital Literacy

http://www.ictliteracy.info/

The ICT Digital Literacy Portal is "the 'public face' of a fast growing international movement focused on promoting Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Digital Literacy." This Web site provides links to various digital literacy efforts and organizations. Check out the Resource Directory for information on ICT Assessment, Research on ICT, and K-12 Resources.

ICT Literacy Maps

http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=33

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21), mentioned earlier, has worked with various professional educational organizations to create a series of ICT Literacy Maps "illustrating the intersection between Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Literacy and core academic subjects including English, mathematics, science and social studies."

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Research

http://www.ets.org/iskills

The Educational Testing Service (ETS) has developed a new iCritical Thinking™ Certification exam "to serve as the new standard in digital literacy certification." The exam is directly aligned with the ACRL Standards for Information Literacy. This Web site provides links to significant documents and reports concerning ICT literacy that were used to develop the exam. Read about the exam, but then click on Research for access to these sources.

National Educational Technology Standards (NETS)

http://www.iste.org/

The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE®) is a membership association for educators and promotes the effective use of technology in PK-12 schools and teacher education. It is well known for its National Educational Technology Standards (NETS) that all educators should be familiar with—NETS for Students 2007, NETS for Teachers 2008, and NETS for Administrators 2009. Rubrics for the NETS are currently being developed.

NCTL: The National Center for Technological Literacy

http://www.mos.org/NCTL/

The National Center for Technological Literacy® (NCTL®) is part of the Museum of Science, Boston. The intent is to integrate "engineering as a new discipline in schools via standards-based K-12 curricular reform." The K-12 Programs, as demonstrated through this Web site, deal with four areas: The Gateway Project, an IMLS-funded effort involving 58 school districts in the United States, Engineering Curricula Development, Educational Standards, and Professional Development. The NCTL offers good resources and is a project to watch.

Media Literacy

Arthur's Guide to Media Literacy

http://pbskids.org/arthur/

parentsteachers/lesson/
medialiteracy/index.html
If you deal with younger children, use this series of lessons from various Arthur episodes to "launch a guided discussion and classroom activities based on a media literacy theme." Topics covered include persuasion in advertising, techniques used to sell products, and media's role in determining who and what is "cool."

Center for Media Literacy
http://www.medialit.org/
The Center for Media Literacy (CML) is an educational, but also commercial, organization that promotes "media literacy education as a framework for accessing, analyzing, evaluating, creating, and participating with media content." While some of the materials are available for purchase, check out the resources in the left column—Reading Room, Media & Values, Best Practices, and Professional Development.

Media Awareness Network
http://www.media-awareness.
ca/english/index.cfm
Media Awareness Network is a Canadian, nonprofit organization that offers "media literacy materials on a wide range of media, including Internet, television, film, video games, newspapers, advertising and popular music." Both the For Parents and the For Teachers section are well worth exploring. Of special interest are the Web-based Resources, most of which are copyright-cleared media education lesson plans and other valuable materials.

Media Education Foundation
http://www.mediaed.org/wp/
handouts-articles
This site offers great resources for units on media literacy. Materials available include "10 Reasons Why Media Education Matters Poster" and multiple variations of how to "deconstruct" and study print advertisement, sales pitches, videos, press releases, etc. In addition, there are Study Guides on topics such as "Constructing Public Opinion" and "Advertising and the End of the World." These are designed to accompany videos produced by the Foundation, but can used separately.

Media Literacy Clearinghouse
http://www.frankwbaker.
com/
Frank Baker and his Web site were probably one of the first ways that many teachers and school librarians learned about media literacy. As a conference speaker or through this Web site, Baker has led the way to show educators the importance of media literacy. His Web site is full of examples of how media distorts the message and offers suggestions for helping children and young adults become more media literate. This is the place to begin.

Media Literacy Week
http://www.medialiteracyweek.
ca/en/default.htm
Mark your calendars for Media Literacy Week, November 1-5, 2010! As a bonus, the Media Education 101 part of this Web site includes useful materials, e.g., What is Media Education?, Curricular Connections, and Downloadable Resources.

National Association for Media Literacy Education
http://www.amlainfo.org/
The National Association for Media Literacy Education (formerly Alliance for a Media Literate America) is a national membership organization dedicated to advancing the field of media literacy education in the United States. While much of this Web site showcases the programs and activities of NAMLE, this section provides information on NAMLE as a national nonprofit organization, its history, how it runs, bylaws and policies, elections, boards, and more.

The News Literacy Project
http://www.
thenewsliteracyproject.org
The News Literacy Project is an "innovative national educational program that is mobilizing seasoned journalists to help middle school and high school students sort fact from fiction in the digital age." The intent is to match volunteer journalists with schools and teachers for classroom visits or videoconferences with students.

Teacher Guides by Subject: Media Literacy
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/
pages/frontline/teach/
categories/media.html
Fifteen detailed lessons are matched with PBS FRONTLINE broadcasts to deal with various aspects of media literacy. For example, "Merchants of Cool" traces "the tactics, techniques, and cultural ramifications of the marketing of mass culture to teenagers. Students will develop media literacy skills by exploring corporate marketing techniques and analyzing media sources."

AdBusters Spoof Ads
https://www.adbusters.org/
gallery/spoofads
This Web site is really an attention-getter. But, what would you expect from a self-described "global network of artists, activists, writers, pranksters, students, educators, and entrepreneurs who want to advance the new social activist movement of the information age. Our aim is to topple existing power structures and forge a major shift in the way we will live in the 21st Century." It is not really as radical as it sounds and is a good source for media examples to begin a discussion of media literacy with young adults.◄

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