



Center
for Media
Literacy

2003 Report of Activities & Accomplishments

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Our mission

to help children and adults prepare for living and learning in a global media culture by translating media literacy research and theory into practical information, training and educational tools for teachers and youth leaders, parents and caregivers of children.

Real World Outreach

Project Smart Art, CML's federally funded demonstration project at Leo Politi Elementary School in downtown Los Angeles, achieved success in September when in-service days and teacher coaching by CML trainer Jeff Share resulted in teachers creating exemplary lessons and units linking core language arts standards with both fine arts standards and media literacy's *Five Key Questions*. Students from kindergarten to grade five are now engaged in a variety of activities from using digital cameras to document media in their neighborhoods to creating 30-second animations and scoring them with sound effects using found objects in the classroom. In addition to the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), CML's partners in this innovative teacher training program are the Education Division of the Music Center of Los Angeles and AnimAction, Inc., headed by former CML Felton Scholar, Cliff Cohen. In 2003 Project SmartArt was approved for the third year of its \$450,000 grant from the US Department of Education and the National Endowment for the Arts.

CML's **Resource Distribution Service** reached nearly a million teachers in 2003 through print and electronic promotion provided by our distribution partners, GPN Educational Media and Teachers Discovery, Inc. Over 50 new books, videos, DVDs, CD ROMs and multimedia curriculum packages qualified for distribution creating a CML resource catalog of nearly 300 practical and useful materials for teaching media literacy in the K-12 classroom as well as afterschool, religious and community educational programs. As a "one-stop shop," (with shopping cart technology!) CML's online resource catalog saves teachers valuable time by selecting *only the best*



resources from over 100 publishers and producers, including hard-to-find independent presses and educational publishers from Canada, Australia and Europe. Check out the complete collection at www.medialit.org/catalog.

In 1994 founder Elizabeth Thoman invented the CML "**Crash Course in Media Literacy**," a 4-hour seminar which has since served as the foundation for hundreds of in-service workshops attended by thousands of teachers throughout the US – and beyond. In 2003, Thoman and Jeff Share reinvented the 'Crash Course' to incorporate the concepts in the new **CML MediaLit Kit™**, particularly its "Five Key Questions that can Change the World!" They also gave it a PowerPoint facelift and created flexible options to adapt it for CML's contract training with groups such as the LAUSD Nutrition Network, the Museum of Tolerance, and the Orange County Health Care Agency. More than 750 teachers were introduced to media literacy in 2003 through the 'Crash Course' and its spin-offs.

CML CONNECT, an e-letter chock full of lesson plans, downloadable reports, articles and teaching ideas plus news of events and trends in media literacy, now goes out monthly to over 5000 teachers and leaders around the world. In 2003 we also added a bi-monthly e-bulletin, **NEW 4 YOU**, which highlights new teaching materials recently added to the CML resource catalog.



The major challenge for U.S. media literacy in this decade is the training of teachers. More than theory, what is needed are *practical* teaching tools coupled with *replicable* techniques. Together, they can transform learning in *real world* classrooms.



“What a fabulous, thought provoking, exciting and inspiring day!”

– elementary teacher upon completing a CML-led workshop.



MegaTRENDS in Media Literacy

Reflecting the growing significance of the Internet, the Center, after two years of development, launched a totally new website in January. By the end of the year, under the direction of CML’s web manager, Sarah Bordac, www.medialit.org contained nearly 1500 pages of rich content organized to assist teachers in connecting practical information, teaching tools and resources with educational goals in 22 searchable topic areas – from advertising to news to violence – and in all curriculum areas: language arts, social studies, health, math/science and the arts. It’s a “virtual encyclopedia” for the media literacy field!



Now one of the most referenced websites on media literacy according to *Google.com*, special features are two document archives available nowhere else on the Internet: 1) original documents and personal papers from Elizabeth Thoman tracing the development of media literacy in the U.S. over her 30 years in the field and 2) an archive of 350 articles from the acclaimed *Media&Values* magazine, published by CML and its predecessor organization under Thoman’s leadership. This historical catalog provides a grounding and a rich research resource that is a major contribution to the media literacy field both for the US and internationally.

CML’s President and CEO Tessa Jolls contributed to an important 2003 initiative of the U.S. Dept. of Education and a consortium of leading technology companies – *Learning for the 21st Century: A Report and Mile Guide for 21st Century Skills*. The Report, which cites media literacy as a skill fundamental to future success and mentions CML’s *MediaLit Kit™* specifically, articulates a compelling vision for education in the United States and provides an urgent call for action. CML created a special section of the website Reading Room to share this important information: www.medialit.org/reading_room/article580.html.

The convergence of education and media is a global phenomenon. That was clearly evident at the **International Congress on Media** held in



The media literacy field both reflects and advances two major forces in our culture: education and media. CML is actively engaged in the transformation of *both* education and media to better meet the needs of young people growing up in a changing global society.

October in Mexico City and attended by Tessa Jolls. It also explains the increasing number of international inquiries we fielded during the year – from South Korea, India, Finland, Argentina, the Philippines and Russia.

Another way CML helps to shed light on this cultural passage is by identifying and distributing cogent new books and innovative resources. Our latest find – James Paul Gee’s revolutionary book, *What Video Games Can Teach Us About Learning and Literacy*, is destined to become an educational classic. USC professor Karen Sternheimer’s new book, *It’s Not the Media: the Truth about Pop Culture’s Influence on Children*, takes aim at the media bashing that too often precludes a deeper understanding of the role of media in children’s lives. We are assisting the **Free Expression Policy Project** to distribute their policy reports on copyright, free expression and censorship and the **National Alliance of Media Arts and Culture** with their 2003 Yearbook: *A Closer Look: Case Studies in Youth Media Production*.

When the Kaiser Family Foundation published its *Fact Sheet on Media Literacy* in December, CML was prominently mentioned and cited. The Fact Sheet overviews the field in the US and outlines the philosophies of different media literacy organizations. It’s online at: http://www.medialit.org/reading_room/article637.html.

New Voices Initiative

A fundamental and consistent understanding of media literacy and the pedagogical framework that underpins our work was hard to come by until we introduced the new CML *MediaLit Kit™* early in 2003. Based on our educational philosophy of *Empowerment through Education*, the *MediaLit Kit™* was conceived by Tessa Jolls as a practical framework and expandable collection of tools to make the concepts of media literacy more accessible to teachers, parents, religious and community leaders and easier to implement in a variety of settings. The *MediaLit Kit™* and its *Five Key Questions that can Change the World* now serves as the foundation and umbrella for all of CML's professional development and curriculum work. The first three tools published in 2003 for the *MediaLit Kit™* include a set of 8 colorful display posters and downloadable handouts outlining CML's basic framework for media literacy, along with a 26-page *Orientation Guide*, explaining the theoretical underpinnings of media education, produced under the direction of Elizabeth Thoman.

With a \$75,000 grant from the Orange County Health Care Agency, CML designed, developed and

piloted *Smoke Detectors!* an innovative anti-smoking curriculum and contest for high school students. More than 500 students participated, demonstrating an overall gain of 21.1% in understanding of tobacco facts and media literacy concepts, measured through pre-and post tests. The grant also provided for training of more than 50 staff from the Orange County Health Care Agency.

When a team of high school social studies teachers through **Project Look Sharp** at Ithaca College in western New York state, successfully tested an idea to teach about Vietnam, the Persian Gulf war and the war in Afghanistan by using covers of *Newsweek* magazine, they applied for grant money to get it published. Working with CML's publishing and marketing expertise, these creative teachers have proudly published *Media Construction of War: A Critical Reading of*

With its extensive history, knowledge and expertise in the media literacy field, the Center plays an important role in identifying and nurturing new ideas and new voices.

History, an outstanding multimedia curriculum kit that teaches critical thinking about media while covering important core content in contemporary American history. It's available exclusively through CML's online catalog.

CML also helped to bring to the US educational marketplace the second edition of the acclaimed Canadian video series, *Scanning Television*. It's a collection (VHS or DVD) of 51 short copyright cleared clips to spark critical inquiry and build media literacy skills. We also opened an American door for New Zealand's leading media literacy author, Geoff Lealand, (*It's All Done with Mirrors: About Television*) and helped to get back into print the "bible" of media literacy – *Teaching the Media* – by England's Len Masterman.

Joining with Board member Frank Dawson, Associate Professor of Communications at Santa Monica College, CML helped coordinate

the Los Angeles downlink site at the college for the worldwide **International Forum on Media Literacy** November 7. Organized by the National Telemedia Council (NTC) to celebrate their 50th Anniversary, the 4-hour Forum was live and interactive from London to Seattle, from Toronto and New York to Madison, WI. The question "Where is the movement today and how will it evolve in the next 50 years?" created lively discussion across all borders. CML is also pleased to provide widespread distribution for *Visions/Revisions: Moving Forward in Media Education*, a book of essays published by NTC as another 50th Anniversary project.

CML teamed with other US media literacy leaders to conduct a six-part media literacy workshop strand at the November conference of the **National Council for Social Studies** in Chicago. CML's Jeff Share was featured in a session on visual literacy and "why the camera *always* lies."



CML's MediaLit Kit... "is a marvelous piece of work – clear, concise, the distillation of the most available research and practice... it could scarcely be bettered."

– Len Masterman
British scholar and author of *Teaching the Media*

*Vision and excellence,
...the seeds of success.*



Leadership

Supporting the building of a strong interdisciplinary media literacy field in the US is a priority for CML, one of the founding members of the new national membership organization, the **Alliance for a Media Literate America (AMLA)**. CML founder Elizabeth Thoman also helped to found the AMLA and in 2003 was elected Executive Secretary of the national AMLA Board of Directors. CML made many contributions to the success of the group's National Media Education Conference held June 28 – July 1 in Baltimore. Jeff Share and Elizabeth Thoman conducted a six-hour "Media Literacy 101" preconference session. Tessa Jolls chaired a panel presentation on **Project Smart Art**. And together with GPN Educational Media, CML was responsible for organizing the ballroom-sized conference bookstore, which was cited by many of the 450 participants as a major highlight of the conference. CML was also instrumental in the 2003 founding of a Southern California Caucus of the AMLA. Jeff Share serves on the steering committee.



It is not enough to take action alone. When we inspire and encourage others to carry forth the message, there's no telling how far it will go.

Thanks to a generous grant from CML Board member Nina Stern, the Center was able to organize a professional public relations launch of the new CML website and the **MediaLit Kit™** to leading educational publications, both print and electronic. Nearly two dozen publications, with a combined circulation over 950,000 readers, responded positively with citations and articles.

The campaign also drew the attention of David Shaw, Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist for the **Los Angeles Times**, who featured the work of the Center in his "Media Matters" column, Sunday, November 30. Read his "impassioned plea for media education in our nation's schools" in our Reading Room at http://www.medialit.org/reading_room/article631.html.

To commemorate the 40th anniversary of the most famous speech in broadcasting, the **Federal Communications Law Journal** dedicated its May 2003 issue to a collection of essays revisiting former FCC Chairman Newton Minow's "vast wasteland" speech to the National Association of Broadcasters. CML founder Elizabeth Thoman was invited to submit an article which was accepted and can be read online at http://www.medialit.org/reading_room/article555.html.

She also contributed a lead article to a special Media Literacy edition of *The Clearing House / A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas* and was invited by Parallax Press to contribute her seminal article, "**Rise of the Image Culture: Re-Imagining the American Dream**" to a book of essays, *Mindfulness in the Marketplace*.

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Photo Credits

P1: Students at Leo Politi Elementary School eagerly engage in media literacy activities. P2: CML conducted a variety of teacher training events during the year for teachers of LA Unified School District. P4: Elizabeth Thoman, Tessa Jolls and the Leo Politi presentation team participate at the National Media Education Conference in June in Baltimore. All photographs by Jeff Share.