Media Literacy Education:

Theory and Practice in Post-Secondary Media Arts Education:

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Full Sail University

Jenée Muyeau

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Abstract

High-functioning media literacy skills have become critical in contemporary society. It falls to all educators to ensure that all students possess these skills. Many administrators and educators in both academic and vocational institutions are not as “new media” literate as their students, and this is reflected in their archaic pedagogy. Media arts studies instruction in colleges, universities, and vocational institutions often fails to connect the dots of media literacy education, media history, critical media theory, media production practice, and students’ media usage. This study proposes an integrated cognitive-constructivist pedagogical model of best instructional practices and specific educational technologies that educators can employ to create more effective media arts studies curricula for the digital native.

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Introduction

Human use of complex symbol systems to communicate evolved from the basic symbols of the earliest human languages and art into complex myths and pictographs. Pictographic writing evolved into the highly codified practice of representing linguistic sounds as drawn *letters*, and reading and writing, as well as the contemporary idea of *literacy*, were born. The National Association for Media Literacy Education (2008) defines *literacy* as "the ability to encode and decode symbols and to synthesize and analyze messages" (¶ 4). Buckingham (2006) posits that traditional literacy, as represented by the three Rs (reading, writing, and arithmetic), now shares airtime with a new type of 21st-century literacy: *media literacy*.

The first university program offering a Bachelor of Arts in film studies in the United States was launched at the University of Southern California (USC) in Los Angeles in 1929 (USC, 2009). According to the USC School of Cinematic Arts website (2009), the school's founding was the result of a collaboration between USC and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences was founded in 1927 by 36 leading film industry producers, directors, and stars, including Louis B. Mayer, Darryl Zanuck, Jesse Lasky, Irving Thalberg, Ernst Lubitsch, D.W. Griffith, Cecil B. DeMille, Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, and Sid Grauman, amongst many others (AMPAS, 2009). This early partnering between an academic institution and entertainment industry leaders set the standard for the design of film studies programs across the United States thereafter. Early film studies educators came from literature and art history, theory, and criticism, as well as from the film industry.

Most film studies (or more commonly now *media arts studies*) programs are organized

into four broad areas of study: history, theory and critical analysis, aesthetics, and production. Today, *Filmmaking.net* (2009) lists 277 film schools in its database across 40 states in the United States. Some of these schools are colleges or universities with programs heavy on a liberal arts approach. Still, others are art schools with an emphasis on conservatory or studio art style instruction. There are also vocational schools that focus on technical skill sets that lead to craft-based positions in the film industry, as well as corporate training from software and hardware manufacturers designed for current industry professionals. Finally, online education, which initially primarily offered programs in education and business, is now expanding to include more media arts studies programs. Each of these approaches to teaching media studies has a unique history and unique strengths and weaknesses.

Media literacy education has its own distinct and separate history from media arts studies. Buckingham (2006) traces early media literacy studies in the United Kingdom to the authors and literary critics F.R. Leavis and Denys Thompson, and their seminal 1933 book, *Culture and Environment: The Training of Critical Awareness*. According to Buckingham (2006), these early media literacy theorists' primary focus and concern was providing students with a form of "inoculation" against the harmful effects of media. In the United States, Marshall McLuhan and John Culkin, working in the early 1960s, are usually considered the progenitors of media literacy education (CML, Moody, *History of Media Literacy in the U.S.A.*, 2007, ¶ 2). Although McLuhan's *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* is generally his most well-known work, he also designed some of the first media literacy curricula for primary schools in the United States (CML, Moody, 2007). In the title of her article on the history of media literacy in the U.S., Kate Moody (2007) dubs John Culkin, colleague and friend of Marshall McLuhan, as

"The Man Who Invented Media Literacy." Culkin believed that all citizens needed to be media literate and that schools were responsible for teaching media literacy (CML, 2007). He designed and developed the Media Studies Master's Degree Program at the New School for Social Research in New York in the 1970s (Moody, 2007).

Buckingham (2006) clearly distinguishes between media literacy education and media arts education. *Media literacy education* teaches media literacy, while *media arts education* is the study of media. Media literacy education and media arts education clearly share some common roots and ideas, but they are not the same. Traditional post-secondary media arts studies programs teach a type of media literacy geared towards those seeking to work professionally in media industries. This study seeks a better understanding of the relationship between media literacy education and media arts education; an understanding that is essential to all types of media education as culture and technology move toward a read/write media convergence.

This researcher asks the following questions: How have society's cultural ideas about teaching and learning kept pace with the average individual's personal and public use of media technology in the 21st century? How does participatory culture, such as blogs, online games, fan culture, and social networks, impact media literacy and media arts education? How do movies, television, web content, games, and educational media impact how humans learn? How does media literacy impact students, educators, and educational institutions? Which educational theories and instructional design approaches are most effective in teaching media literacy and media arts studies? How does increased media literacy impact or inform the effectiveness of subsequent media production?

Thesis Statement

High-functioning media literacy skills have become critical to survival in contemporary society. It falls to educators to ensure that all students possess these skills. Many administrators and educators in both academic and vocational institutions are not as "new media" literate as their students, and this is reflected in their archaic pedagogy. Media arts studies instruction in colleges, universities, and vocational institutions often fails to connect the dots of media literacy education, media history, critical media theory, media production practice, and students' daily media diet. This study proposes an integrated cognitive-constructivist pedagogical model of best instructional practices and specific educational technologies that educators can employ to create more effective media arts studies curricula for the digital native. The most effective educational technologies educators can employ are those already familiar to most digital-native students, such as the Internet, social networking tools, blogs, online games, software tutorials, podcasts, and vodcasts. This paper illustrates how educators can easily employ these new technologies to enhance student learning.

Educational Significance of the Study

Media permeates every aspect of contemporary life and social interaction. Individuals are often inundated with media-based communication tasks in their daily lives. A better understanding of how people cognitively and culturally process and create meaning from media can equip educators to teach students to create media messages that communicate their ideas more creatively and effectively. Better media literacy skills will help educators, professionals, and students alike in their public and private lives.

This analysis specifically reviews the role of media literacy in post-secondary media arts

education in colleges, universities, technology-based vocational schools, art conservatories, and corporate training, and proposes a best practices instructional approach. This study can offer post-secondary media arts educators and administrators effective instructional solutions during their curriculum design process and implementation phase.

Definition of Terms

Media Arts Education

Buckingham (2006) defines *media arts studies* as "the study of media." Media arts studies focus on media history, theoretical critical analysis, and media production practice. In media arts studies, the emphasis is placed on either historical and theoretical textual analysis of media products or the means of production (the technical, aesthetic, and practical aspects of media making). Media history courses are most often found at colleges and universities, and usually focus on early film or television. These courses mainly focus on early film genres and directors, or on early television programming, and involve readings on technical and aesthetic histories, screenings, analysis, and discussion. Theoretical critical analysis courses usually examine film theory and textual analysis through applied readings and screenings, much like literature courses (Bordwell, 1996). Production courses usually focus on the hands-on, technical aspects of media production. In production courses, students have the opportunity to make their own films and videos (Sabal, 2009). According to *Filmmaking.net* (2009), user feedback, most students who apply to one of the 277 film schools in the United States every year do so to study media production – they hope to become employed in the media production industry.

Media Literacy Education

NAMLE (2008) defines *media* as "all electronic or digital means and print or artistic

visuals used to transmit messages" (¶ 5). For this research paper, the term media includes print, movies, television, web content, games, educational media, and participatory culture, such as blogs, online games, and social networks. In 1992, conference participants at the Aspen Media Literacy Leadership Institute coined this commonly used definition: "media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media in a variety of forms" (¶ 2). The Center for Media Literacy (2008) has since expanded this definition:

> Media Literacy is a 21st-century approach to education. It provides a framework to access, analyze, evaluate, and create messages in a variety of forms — from print to video to the Internet. Media literacy builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy. (¶ 4)

For example, the ability to quickly and easily search the web for definitions of *literacy* exhibits one type of media literacy: using a computer and the Internet to find information. Critically analyzing and assessing the credibility of each source illustrates yet another form of media literacy. Teaching students how to decode both political and commercial media messages, from print to movies and TV, is at the core of *media literacy education*. Inherent in any definition of media literacy is a participant's ability to assess media credibility and awareness of the political and socio-economic power structures of public media construction and distribution (NAMLE, 2008).

NAMLE (2008) clearly delineates the subtle differences between *media literacy* and *media literacy education* in this way:

> Media literacy is seen to consist of a series of communication competencies, including

> the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and communicate information in a variety of forms, including print and non-print messages. Media literacy empowers people to be both critical thinkers and creative producers of an increasingly wide range of messages using image, language, and sound. It is the skillful application of literacy skills to media and technology messages… Media literacy education is the educational field dedicated to teaching the skills associated with media literacy. (¶ 1)

Learning Paradigms

Behaviorist learning theories hypothesize that "learning happens when a correct response is demonstrated following the presentation of a specific environmental stimulus" (Instructional Design Knowledge Base, 2006, ¶ 1). Behaviorism is based on the idea of *stimulus-response* or *operant conditioning*. Behaviorists subscribe to the idea that a learner's behavior is always motivated by positive reinforcement or negative reinforcement. Pavlov's famous study with dogs represents early behaviorist theory, which was the dominant view of learning until the 1960s, when it was largely supplanted by Cognitive theories (Learning Theories Knowledge Base, 2009).

Cognitive learning theories suggest that the human mind is "like a computer" and that learning is like processing data (Learning Theories Knowledge Base, 2009, ¶ 1). The emphasis in the Cognitive paradigm is on the processes of *information mapping* and *symbol manipulation*, rather than on positive or negative feedback responses, as in Behaviorism. Cognitive theorists propose that knowledge helps learners construct a mental map of reality, and that the process of learning modifies that map, adding new information.

Elaboration Theory is a cognitive instructional design theory that postulates that course

content "should be organized from simple to complex order, while providing a meaningful context in which subsequent ideas can be integrated" (Learning Theories Knowledge Base, 2009, ¶ 1). Charles Reigeluth, the originator of Elaboration Theory, outlined its major tenets as follows:

1. It values a sequence of instruction that is as holistic as possible, to foster meaning-making and motivation.
2. It allows learners to make many scope and sequence decisions on their own during the learning process.
3. It is an approach that facilitates rapid prototyping in the instructional development process.
4. It integrates viable approaches to scope and sequence into a coherent design theory. (¶ 5)

Constructivism suggests that learners "construct" knowledge by linking different experiences and pieces of information, in effect *constructing* and *re-constructing* reality. The idea here is that learning is built out of experiences and activities. Two prominent constructivist theories are *Social Development Theory* (Vygotsky) and *Discovery Learning Theory* (Bruner). Social Development Theory posits that "social interaction precedes development; consciousness and cognition are the end product of socialization and social behavior" (Learning Theories Knowledge Base, 2009, ¶ 1). Lave and Wenger's "Communities of Practice" (Learning Theories Knowledge Base, 2009, ¶ 1) also delves into the social component of learning. Collaborative/ Cooperative Learning environments function on three primary types of interactions: (1) Collaboration between teacher and students in class interaction, (2) Collaboration between students and teacher, specifically in terms of curriculum and activities design, and (3)

Cooperation between students, students helping each other to find solutions and problem-solve. Groups form to solve problems and support one another throughout the learning process. Bruner's Discovery Learning Theory is an inquiry-based instructional approach that assumes learners need to discover new information and make connections on their own for learning to occur (Learning Theories Knowledge Base, 2009).

While many different theories fall under the broad heading of Constructivism, one common thread that they all share, is the idea that the primary role of the instructor is to help set the stage for learning to take place and then get out of the way and let the students construct their own *authentic learning experience* through problem solving and testing (Alessi & Trollop, 2001). Instruction is viewed as "a process of supporting knowledge construction rather than communicating knowledge" (Instructional Design Knowledge Base, 2006, ¶ 3).

E-Learning Media Technologies

At first glance, the differences between *Learning Management Systems* (LMS), *Content Management Systems* (CMS), and *Learning Content Management Systems* (LCMS) seem slight, subtle, and based solely on the letters in their acronyms. On deeper examination, it becomes apparent that all of the differences between the three can be reduced to how each is used, by whom, and to what objective.

Learning Management Systems (LMSs) focus on managing and delivering previously created course content, with an emphasis on providing administrators the ability to "target, deliver, track, analyze, and report" on learners' performance (Nichani, 2001, ¶ 3). LMSs are not typically designed to create course content, but rather to manage and deliver courses, assess learner performance, and track student activity. Nichani (2001) further posits that, "the smallest

self-contained piece of instruction in the LMS is the course itself" (¶ 4). Many limitations of LMSs stem from their inability to reuse content from any individual course and from their focus on an administrator- or instructor-driven approach to teaching and learning, rather than a learner-centric one. By contrast, *Content Management Systems* (CMSs) focus on reusing instructional content across multiple courses. CMSs are designed expressly to manage content resources. Nichani (2001) states, "the smallest self-contained piece of information in the CMS is the content component" (¶ 8). This element of CMSs can work well for instructional designers, giving them greater freedom to customize learning environments, course content, and delivery.

As the acronym suggests, LCMSs integrate components of both the LMS and the CMS effectively. This integrative approach allows administrators, instructional designers, and learners to create customizable, reusable content packets and courses that can be easily modified as needed. This becomes a much more learner-centric approach, giving the learner the information they need (just-enough learning) when they need it (just-in-time learning) (Nichani, 2001). The need to both create and manage reusable learning objects, course content, and delivery in this way drives the combined LMS and CMS system that LCMSs provide.

Learning Content Management Systems seems a natural evolutionary progression from LMSs and CMSs. Educational institutions are businesses; they sell knowledge, information, experience, the promise of enhanced skills and performance. LCMSs make this transaction more efficient for administrators and can provide a broader range of access to courseware design for instructional designers, educators, and learners.

As Internet communication technology spawned social networking sites such as *Facebook* and *MySpace*, and *massive multiplayer online role-playing games* (MMORPGs) such as *Second Life* and *World of Warcraft*, *Personal Learning Environments* (PLEs) were the next obvious step in e-learning media technology. PLEs are relatively new on the e-learning horizon, having emerged only in the last few years on the heels of social networking systems and online gaming (Atwell, 2007). Atwell (2007) suggests that PLEs shift control over educational content delivery to learners rather than to administrators and teachers, as in LMS and CMS models.

Literature Review

Media Arts Education

Most historians credit Thomas Edison in the U.S. and the Lumières, Louis and Auguste, in France with the invention of cinema in the 1890s (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). Bordwell and Thompson (2008) situate cinema as a relatively new art form, at barely 120 years old, especially when compared to other artistic endeavors, such as literature, art, music, and theatre. Bordwell (1996) further suggests that by the 1970s, eighty years after the invention of cinema and forty years after the founding of the first film studies Bachelor of Arts program at USC in 1929, film studies were still considered "disreputable" by the academy at large (Bordwell, 1996, p. 4). While literature, art, music, and theatre already had a long and illustrious history of theoretical critical analysis by the early 1970s, film studies were still at the toddler stage as far as the academic world was concerned, and many early film studies scholars put much of their research efforts into legitimizing their field of endeavor. During this period, television studies were usually added almost as an afterthought to film studies departments, or even in

some cases journalism departments. From the inception of film studies in the academy, there were two simultaneously complementary and competitive approaches or areas of film study: theory and critical analysis, and production practice. Theory and critical analysis were the venue of scholars, while production practice was the venue of filmmakers. Even today, film studies (or *media arts studies*) programs are most often organized into four broad areas of study: history, theory and critical analysis, aesthetics, and production. Most liberal arts media studies departments in universities require their students to complete courses in all four areas but expect them to choose a focus area, either history, theory and critical analysis, *or* production. They are also generally organized into three different media modes: film, television, and new media.

This schism in pedagogy, media forms, and modes has given rise to different types of schools and approaches to media studies. There are five types of instruction currently widely available to students wishing to pursue media studies as a field of study: colleges and universities, art conservatories, vocational institutions, authorized industry corporate style software and hardware training, and online courses and programs. Each of these types of media instruction is unique, with its own unique approaches and instructional goals.

Most colleges and universities take a traditional academic liberal arts approach to teaching media studies. Their goals are to provide a well-rounded liberal arts education, including history and theory of arts and sciences, in conjunction with media history and theory studies and technical media production instruction. The art conservatory approach, such as offered by the American Film Institute and other similar schools, is derived from the European studio art training model and focuses primarily on the aesthetic and technical aspects of media production (AFI, 2009). These types of schools usually place a great deal of emphasis on the

aesthetic critique of student work. Vocational institutions specializing in media training are typically primarily interested in providing technical training that leads to specific industry jobs. Most software and hardware training designed by manufacturers is typically directed at industry professionals and follows a corporate training model, such as Avid Technology Inc.'s courses (Avid, 2009). Their goal is to sell their product by ensuring users are familiar with their product's features.

Finally, online education is now making inroads into media training. Online training encompasses all of the educational models introduced above. Many institutions are adapting their course and program offerings for the online venue. Online education can certainly broaden an educational institution's potential student pool, but it also presents unique challenges. Simply making courses developed for an academic or vocational venue available online is rarely effective, as it does not account for the specific considerations of the online environment or the online student.

Additional considerations in media arts education today include the changing face of media technology, digital native learners, and student collaboration in production environments.

Media Literacy Education

In the years before World War II, many early media literacy education (or *screen education*) initiatives were aligned with educators, family, and/or faith-based organizations that were trying to combat the perceived negative influences of commercialized or politicized media on children and young adults (CML, 2007). Early media theorists Marshall McLuhan and John Culkin represent a separate, parallel historical path to media literacy that emerged from theoretical approaches in cultural studies, psychology, anthropology, and linguistics. McLuhan and Culkin

were more interested in studying media as part of a language system that interacted with, reflected, and helped to shape culture and society, than in protecting against the potential harmful effects of media. Both of these schools of thought still exist in media literacy education today. These two approaches to media literacy education utilize similar media analysis techniques and share the common goal of creating more informed and discriminating audiences that can *decode* politicized and commercialized media messages, but differ slightly in their underlying philosophy and objectives.

The Aspen Media Literacy Leadership Institute conference in 1992 defined media literacy as "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media in a variety of forms" (NAMLE, 2008, ¶ 2). Although this view is widely accepted among media literacy scholars, there is considerable variation in the interpretation and application of this definition. Renee Hobbs (2001) discusses the tensions and conflicts between educators and scholars with differing views on what media literacy education is and should be in her article, *Seven Great Debates in the Media Literacy Movement – Circa 2001* (CML, 2007).

Henry Jenkins, Professor of Comparative Media Studies at MIT and a prolific author on media, culture, and media literacy, is both a scholar and a self-proclaimed media "fan." He is enthusiastic about his topics, yet thorough in his scholarship. In *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (2006), Jenkins analyzes several case studies of popular media and participatory fan culture, including *Survivor*, *Harry Potter*, and *Star Wars*. He also analyzes the politics and economics of participatory culture. Jenkins extends his discussion of media into the nature of Wikipedia, Web 2.0, social networking, and YouTube. New participatory media is changing long-held cultural ideas about media literacy and how audiences

interact with, and even help construct, popular media (Jenkins, 2006). Jenkins' critical scholarship pushes boundaries; he is a seminal figure in media literacy studies.

The evolving relationship between mass culture and a renascent grassroots folk culture, as Henry Jenkins describes in *Convergence Culture: Where Old Media and New Media Collide* (2006), is driven by the collision of the 19th century's industrial revolution and the 20th century's information revolution. With the assembly line mass production techniques of Henry Ford, cultural media products, music, books, film, television, games, and Internet media are produced, marketed, and distributed to consumers across the United States. The major media outlets in the United States are all large conglomerate multi-media corporations because, traditionally, the mass production and distribution of media product is expensive and thus controlled by an elite few, the *gatekeepers*.

New technology and "new media" have created evolutionary shifts in consumer media use and production. Personal computers, digital video cameras, and the Internet have forever changed the means of production and distribution of media. Now everyone can be a media producer. This represents a revival in grassroots art production. In traditional grassroots art production, social communities emerge from collective art-making. This process is reminiscent of Vygotsky's Theory of Social Development, which holds that social interaction always precedes development (Learning Theories Knowledge Base, 2009). The phenomenon of fan culture and the media they produce also dovetails into Lave and Wenger's idea of Communities of Practice (Learning Theories Knowledge Base, 2009). *Machinima* works like "Wizards" and "Bounty Trail" are the result of communities of practice at work. This type of media creation represents a shift from mass culture to convergence culture, and a shift from read-only culture to

read/write culture.

Learning Paradigms in Media Education

Teaching and learning, the process of transferring and acquiring knowledge, has been considered an arcane art form for most of human history. From tribal shamans to ancient Greek philosophers and Renaissance master artisans, historically, significant emphasis has been placed on the role and function of the teacher. The Age of Reason in the 17th century ushered in the Age of Enlightenment in the 18th century (Shlain, 2001). The Age of Enlightenment paved the way for the Age of Science in the 19th century, and the scientific method could now be applied to the art of teaching and learning. As science began to gain insight into the human brain and human social systems, the emphasis gradually shifted towards the student and the process of learning.

Cognitive learning theories are centered on the concept of the human brain as an information processor and question the nature of information processing. A key component in information processing is the perceptive apparatus. In the case of media studies, an audience must first *see* and *hear* the media product, movie, television show, game, and so on, before processing the visual and aural information contained therein. Block (2001) illustrates how the components of visual storytelling in the media arts, *line*, *shape*, *form*, *color*, *tone*, *movement*, *and rhythm*, help filmmakers to move an audience's attention around the screen, as well as move them emotionally and psychologically into a desired state. In his article *A Case for Cognitivism* (1989), Bordwell discusses the cognitive and social processes in the brain that enable the audience to understand a story.

E-Learning Media Technologies

Learning Content Management Systems (LCMSs) follow design-based educational theories and models, such as ADDIE (analyze, design, develop, implement, and evaluate), and their focus is on the presentation of materials and on assessing student retention, or on data management and administrative tasks (Nichani, 2001). In contrast, Personal Learning Environments (PLEs) are more constructivist in nature, allowing learners to engage in discovery learning (Bruner) and create communities of practice (Learning Theories Knowledge Base, 2009). For example, PLEs give learners a great deal of control over the topics and methods of learning, encouraging them to explore and even create their own learning environment. Atwell (2007) posits that PLEs, much like social networking applications and online gaming, also provide a means for learners to communicate with each other and their instructors, creating learning communities, where knowledge is shared across the group (Atwell, 2007). In the future, perhaps Personal Learning Environments can be used by learners/users across multiple institutions, creating academic profiles and portfolios that can be maintained and customized over years of study.

Current/Past Solutions to Thesis Problem in Practice

There are five primary styles of teaching or educational paradigms currently impacting educators' thinking about media arts studies: liberal arts colleges and universities, art conservatories, vocational training, corporate training, and e-learning. Each of these educational paradigms bumps up against the others, but, for practical purposes, each seems to be an isolated educational island unto itself. Rarely are these approaches objectively examined and compared. Seldom do educators and scholars discuss

on how each type of educational institutional system or paradigm works or does not work for students, or how they might interact with each other over the course of a person's educational lifetime. Most institutions are much more concerned with differentiating their specific paradigm from others (and marketing themselves accordingly) than with examining what may work well in others and "borrowing" techniques and instructional approaches to design more effective instruction.

This researcher has observed that the rationale behind these current educational models is less about teaching or learning efficacy and more about cultural continuity. A university model is what it is, largely based on tradition; the same is true for vocational training and corporate training. E-Learning is relatively new, so adherence to previously established methods is less, but even within its short lifespan, e-learning protocols have been established and codified. Protocols in e-learning have largely grown out of Learning Management Systems such as *Blackboard*.

What works and what does not work in current media arts instruction environments? In most cases, current educational solutions for media arts studies face the paradox that their paradigms' greatest strengths are also their greatest weaknesses.

For example, traditional liberal arts colleges and university media arts programs are often *too* broad-based. Since their primary goal is to provide a well-rounded education in arts and sciences, they often fall short in technical media production training. Media theory is usually less expensive to offer and requires less investment in specialist instructors and equipment than production-based courses. After completing a four-year degree in media arts studies, few students have a specific enough skill-set to gain work in media production at anything except the

lowest entry-level positions. These students often need to pursue graduate studies or technical training at vocational schools to make their skills more marketable. Quite often, the equipment in colleges and universities is outdated and/or poorly maintained due to budget constraints. Additionally, most film schools emphasize traditional production crew positions, such as producer, director, cinematographer, and editor (Sabal, 2009). While adhering to the traditional "Hollywood" style, crew positions can teach students high-end workflows and relationship dynamics, and are usually a good lesson in collaboration; however, they can create artificial tension and limit students' roles and learning. This approach can also minimize the technology and collaboration methods students use in their daily lives when producing media content with their peers.

Conservatory art schools most often require students to focus on one specific area of study in an old-world "studio art" style approach that stresses production skills and art aesthetics. Students generally receive more concentrated instruction in production and thus become more skilled in their chosen area of study, as opposed to broad-based studies in a liberal arts college or university. However, with a studio art emphasis on media production crafts, basic media literacy, media history, theory and critical studies are often sacrificed. Although most art conservatory schools stress a balance between art and technology, many are biased, leaning more towards art aesthetics instruction than technology instruction. In some cases, technical instruction is inadequate. Sabal (2009) points out that in most art conservatory schools, either traditional "Hollywood" style crew positions or the individual auteur approach is emphasized, depending on the school and the area of study chosen by the student. This can either require students to conform to the mainstream Hollywood filmmaking

norms or rebel against them entirely. Both approaches can isolate students, rather than connect them in active, engaging, and constructive collaboration.

The student-to-instructor ratio is most often quite low in art conservatory schools, with small class sizes and a strong emphasis on mentorship (AFI, 2009). This can be a huge plus for students, unless there is a conflict between the instructor and the student. Usually, art schools are either very well funded by private or corporate contributions or very underfunded. This impacts the quality of equipment and instructors, which in turn affects the availability of equipment and instructor mentorship, both of which are key components of the art school paradigm. This dichotomy makes it difficult for students to wisely choose a school to invest in – school and program selection can be hit-or-miss. Finally, this paradigm is based on a long history of the European master/apprentice relationship in the art studio, dating back to the Renaissance or earlier. This tradition includes the "critique," in which students' work is evaluated by artists or filmmakers-in-residence and classmates. This is a very important part of the art school experience.

Unfortunately, it is often unnecessarily brutal and anything but constructive. Although this is not always the case, the nature of the critique depends entirely on the mentor/instructor's skills, style, beliefs, personality, and individual tastes. An unnecessarily negative approach can have long-lasting, far-reaching consequences for the student, not least the fulfillment of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Students learn that this antagonistic approach is what a critique is *supposed* to be and then pass this belief along to their own students.

Technical or vocational schools stress technical skills, "real-world" learning scenarios, and job placement over media literacy, media arts aesthetics, history, or theory and criticism. Much like art schools, many vocational schools are privately funded, so their equipment and

instructor quality and availability vary greatly from school to school. Most students who attend vocational schools do so because they lack the experience, funding, and/or time required to gain admission to a liberal arts college or university, or to an art conservatory. Specifically, students who attend vocational schools do so to gain technical mastery of the tools and means of production and to secure subsequent employment.

While vocational schools, like art schools, usually allow students to focus on a specific area of study, students may find that there is little or no "big picture" context provided in their courses. If art conservatory schools are sometimes biased towards art and aesthetics and weak on technical instruction, vocational schools are sometimes just the opposite. Vocational schools are often very good at technical instruction and job placement, but lacking in art and aesthetics instruction. Since vocational schools place so much emphasis on job skills, any curriculum that is perceived as unrelated to specific job tasks is often deemed unimportant and irrelevant. In line with this view, vocational schools often offer "real-life" courses that supposedly reflect authentic work scenarios.

In some cases, these types of courses are poorly designed with little or no thought of educational theories or structured assessment to inform them, and create artificially stressful situations in which students are unnecessarily abused. Much like the abusive art critique in art conservatory schools, the real-life scenario is often based more on an individual instructor's experiences, personality, perspectives, and beliefs than on any specific working scenario. Students can feel discouraged and believe they do not "measure up" if they do poorly in such classes.

Corporate training models are unique in that courses are usually directed specifically towards working adults learning job-specific task-based workflows or scenarios or software, and/

or hardware products. Corporate-style courses tend to be very compressed, lasting only a few days or weeks, so students can get back to their jobs and use their new training immediately. Most corporate training is highly effective at teaching how to "do" multi-step tasks and very good at distilling data down to its essence. Corporate training can be an efficient way to teach and learn software and hardware use. The downside of corporate training is that it rarely encourages critical thinking or problem-solving. Lessons are so focused that anything "outside the scope of this class" is often ignored. In this type of instruction, data is so highly compressed that little time is given for assimilation, leaving students' heads spinning from information overload. Although corporate courses are adept at communicating data chunks, learner retention is weak unless reinforced quickly on the job. Even the best corporate training can devolve into little more than a product demo illustrating a specific software or hardware manufacturer's product line, followed by purchasing options. In other words, corporate training courses are often used as marketing tools.

At its core, all education has always been about the transmission of knowledge and information, sometimes cultural, sometimes technical, often both. The ability to teach and learn paved the way for all other human development and endeavor. The problem has always been how to get the most information to the most people, while still maintaining quality in teaching and learning. Very complex educational institutions have been created to accomplish this task. Economic and physical resources can limit the learning and teaching opportunities afforded by these traditional educational systems. Remote learning is an answer to these limitations.

The idea of remote learning is clearly not new, as evidenced by early mail-based

correspondence schools such as the American School of Correspondence that have been offering courses for one hundred years or more (American School of Correspondence, 2008). It is interesting to note, however, that the proliferation and rapid rise in the development of remote learning environments parallels that of computers. As computer and communication technology ramped up in the latter half of the 20th century, it opened the possibility of online virtual learning environments, making more diverse opportunities for remote teaching and learning available. The ability to push video and audio streams over the Internet, to create online communities, to share knowledge and information, both cultural and technical, instantly to amazingly vast and diverse audiences, changed everything. As technology has made e-learning management and delivery systems more accessible, effective, and desirable, this type of learning experience has had an increasing impact on the first four, more traditional, educational models. Among the many pros of online learning are the greater diversity of both students and instructors and the flexibility of asynchronous learning. Many more people can attend online programs that otherwise would not be able to attend traditional courses, from people with disabilities to full-time workers.

Many of the features in LMS, CMS, and LCMS systems have been developed, in part, because of the e-learning delivery methodology. The danger here is that software begins to design educational curriculum, and the innately human component of learning is lost. In online education, there is a significant risk that students will become frustrated and confused by the technology, as well as isolated from instructors and classmates, thereby minimizing the social aspect of learning. Struggling with the technology can also get in the way of learning the course material. The biggest difference between the two types of learning environments, traditional classroom vs.

online learning, is immediacy in communication and problem resolution. In a classroom, it is easier to check and, if necessary, correct students' understanding immediately. Online, it may be more difficult to read the facial and non-verbal cues that tell a student how to "read" the lesson correctly or tell a teacher that a student is confused. Communication via email may be delayed or misconstrued, and may require successive emails or online chat sessions to clarify. Going to class physically, sitting in an actual classroom, also provides more opportunities for students to interact with each other. Students can more easily check their understanding against their classmates' when they have easy access and can communicate openly and freely in a classroom setting.

All these potential pitfalls in online learning also exist in the actual classroom; it's just that the classroom's social framework is designed to address them. It becomes more challenging to address communication and information transfer issues in an online classroom environment.

Proposed Solutions to Thesis Problem

Learning is not a "one size fits all" kind of game. Variation in learners, course material, learning environments, and instructors must be considered in instructional design. While learning theories and instructional paradigms can provide valuable insights for both teachers and students, no single theoretical approach or institutional paradigm can serve all situations or needs. The most effective teachers and schools will remain open to their students' needs and flexible enough to use whatever teaching methodologies, technologies, learning models, and theories are necessary to effectively convey their message to their students. Both types of learning and teaching, the traditional classroom and the virtual online classroom, have strengths

and weaknesses, and sometimes it is not so easy to tell them apart. Strong social connections, interaction among instructors and students, students and their peers, and open lines of communication are all crucial to learning success in all educational environments. Media literacy is critical for building online communities and resources, which are key to connecting students to their instructors, each other, and the rest of the world. Through critical media literacy, students can engage in media-based discovery learning, which can expand their immediate circle of information and help them achieve their personal and academic goals. In the current era, definitions of media literacy need to include not just the ability to "read" and decode media messages, but also the ability to "write" and encode media messages in a variety of media modes and genres. Media literacy impacts all academic areas of study and endeavor, not just media arts studies.

Traditionally, media arts studies courses and programs have taught these read/write skills only to prepare students for professional careers in media production. Schools spent their efforts teaching students how to emulate the media production elite, the *gatekeepers*. This is because most traditional media arts studies courses and programs of study still operate under 20th-century instructional paradigms. It is time for instructional paradigms to change to accurately reflect the daily lives of digital native students. Any media arts studies curricula game plan must include integrated instructional paradigms and learning theories, and a concentrated effort to design a new, media-rich, media-literate instructional paradigm. Media arts instruction in all learning environments, liberal arts colleges and universities, art school conservatories, vocational schools, corporate training, and online environments must strive to effectively teach students of all ages to read and write media messages in multiple media modes and formats.

Increased media literacy skills lead to more competent and informed citizens. By providing an integrated or blended learning experience, all types of media instruction can be more organic, holistic, and efficacious. By utilizing basic computer, video, and Internet technologies, as well as PLEs and social networking applications, colleges and universities, vocational schools, and art conservatories alike can reach beyond their traditional limitations. A small investment in labor and technology in integrated or blended learning environments has the potential to yield colossal, far-reaching results, including increased efficacy in teaching methodologies, learner retention, and satisfaction. Connecting with digital natives in familiar media environments is analogous to teaching media arts studies in their native language.

Integration of Proposed Solutions with Current/Past Solutions

This researcher suggests an integrated cognitive-constructivist instructional approach that combines traditional media arts studies models, such as those found in colleges, universities, and art conservatories, with vocational and corporate technical instruction models and online learning platforms. This integrated approach would offset some of the limitations of each of these environments. By using vocational and technical corporate instruction methods in colleges, universities, and conservatories, specifically for technical coursework, the technical instruction deficiencies often found in these environments can be balanced and better, more current production methods applied to student media productions. This can be accomplished by partnering with leading software and hardware manufacturers (such as Apple, Avid Technology Inc., and RED, etc.) to provide corporate-style seminars for students enrolled in production courses. Corporate training limitations can be met by partnering with software and hardware manufacturers, as well as vocational schools, to allow students to engage in more hands-on

practice after compressed corporate style training. Partnering can allow for corporate-style training and materials to be applied in vocational schools. Partnering can also make university lectures, screenings, and analyses available to both corporate trainers and vocational schools. Online platforms can seamlessly enable this type of partnering and material exchange. Through podcast/vodcast lectures, hands-on video tutorials, and demos posted on video hosting sites such as YouTube and Vimeo, and linked to social networking sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn, users can access materials and engage in robust discussions remotely.

Electronic video portfolios built and accessed through YouTube and Vimeo allow students to create and share their work with instructors and classmates, and allow instructors and classmates to post comments, recreating critiquing environments. By utilizing existing software applications and basic web-based media technology, educators can create media-rich information collectives that cross the school/brain barrier.

In the 21st century, educators must prepare students to effectively use available media to encode and decode messages relevant to them. The practice of media arts studies instruction is where culture, technology, and education collide. The future is here.

Where will it lead? Perhaps lifelong educational media portfolios that help learners to design, plan, implement, and track their educational experience from the cradle to the grave?

Conclusions

It is nearly impossible to predict what new technologies might develop in the next few years and the impact they might have on culture, as well as on methods, modes, and forms of media messages. Historically, as the technology of production processes, methods

of distribution, and methods through which an audience or user experiences a media event, all evolve, so does the form of artistic expression. All art (including media arts) is like language: over time, it evolves and adapts to the needs of the people within a culture. Like language, popular usage comes and goes from one generation to the next. The evolution of the language of media arts is no different from that of language. One thing is consistent, however, *why* humans communicate in the first place has remained the same for millennia. No matter how much might change (how films and TV shows are made or viewed), or *what* might change (story, structure, form, medium), or even *who* might change (media made by an elite, highly trained few or the average person), the *why* stays the same: to connect.

Traditional storytelling media (print, film, television), new media technologies (Web 2.0, blogs, social networking applications, online games, interactive media), and educational media (LCMSs, PLEs, video podcasts, tutorials) all serve that function.

It is no longer uncommon for the average person (or even small children) to have some familiarity with and access to the processes of "making a movie." What once was created only by an elite few can now be made with a home video camera and a computer by just about anyone, anywhere, and distributed on the World Wide Web almost immediately. It is clear that there is still a significant difference between a high-profile, high-budget blockbuster movie or hit TV show and a video posted by a teenager on YouTube. However, the technology explosion that has made every individual a multimedia storyteller has created a proliferation of media forms and distribution methods that is revolutionizing the cultural relevance and understanding of media literacy and media education.

Suggestions for Further Research

Further research should include the implementation and field testing of integrated classroom/online learning scenarios. Implementation should be followed by the evaluation of actual blended classroom and online media arts courses that include media theory and production and address the basic criteria for media literacy: the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media messages in multiple media modes and forms. Course implementation should then be followed by student performance assessment and student and educator surveys. The ADDIE model (analyze, design, develop, implement, evaluate) should be employed in a cyclical method to ensure that all learning goals and objectives are met.

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