

terpreting news rankled some of those closely aligned with the journalism industry. In addition, including psychological measures seemed too far afield. In some ways, this reflects a desire to focus on NEWS literacy more than news LITERACY. Which brings us back to Lippmann.

“We are told about the world before we see it. We imagine most things before we experience them. And those preconceptions, unless education has made us acutely aware, govern deeply the whole process of perception.”<sup>3</sup>

Lippmann, applying insights from the then-relatively new field of social psychology, described how stereotypes and blind spots work to filter and skew our interpretation of mass media messages. Remember, this is at a time when there were fewer news sources and it was far easier to make some sort of determination about any source’s credibility than it is today. So the problem Lippmann is identifying has almost nothing to do with message sources and everything to do with limits on our interpretive abilities. To me, that suggests that the focus of news literacy ought to be less on distinguishing among news sources and more on how the ways we get news—mediated by technologies, a host of institutional and organisational forces and our own psychological tools—shapes our understanding. And if we adjust our focus in that way, news literacy research and practice also need to make sure the scope is broader than professional journalism and the definitions of news more inclusive. In the end, that might mean news literacy is perhaps less distinct from media literacy than some might desire. But I think it could be better positioned to help citizens handle the challenges to democratic decision-making Lippmann identified all those years ago.

## References

- 1 Lippmann, W. (1920). *Liberty and the News*. New York: The Free Press, p. 5.
- 2 Dewey, J. (1922). “Public Opinion,” *The New Republic* 30 (May 3), p. 286.
- 3 Lippmann, W. (1922/1965). *Public Opinion*. New York: The Free Press, p. 59.

# Why - and how - news publishers worldwide help with news literacy

**By Aralynn Abare McMane, PhD, Executive director for youth engagement and news literacy, The World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA), Paris**

**When 34 journalists were killed while covering a Philippine election, Raia and Ruel Landicho, publishers of two small weeklies in the region of the deadly attack, organized a day of free workshops at their Sinag printing plant to help local youth understand the role of a free press. Ruel said at the time, “We believe that in a time when press freedom is being attacked in our country... it is important to teach our youth that journalism is a noble profession.” They expected perhaps one hundred participants. One thousand attended.**

Such publisher commitment to news literacy is essential, deserves to be honoured and should be copied. So it was that the Landicos’ initiative won a World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) World Young Reader Prize in 2011.

A unique strength of news literacy comes from its origins in journalism and journalists, with the natural emphasis on informed questioning of all information. That said, an understanding of how journalism works, the dangers to some of those who do it, and its purpose in encouraging democracy all need to be at the start of any news literacy (or media literacy) activity, well before the classic deconstruction of media messages.

That philosophy was reinforced for WAN-IFRA after inviting Paul Mihailidis, director of the Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change and an editor of this volume, to report to WAN-IFRA in 2008 about the results of an experiment involving a University of Maryland media literacy course. He found that while the course did a good job of training students to be critical thinkers about media messages, it also left them become highly cynical about and media and about the role of journalism in a democracy (Mihailidis 2008).

That course has been repaired, but there remains a challenge elsewhere that in the name of “media literacy” quality journalism becomes demonized if we are not very, very careful. Or, the central watchdog role of news media can be ignored, which is the case in one state-of-the-art media lab in Central Europe where the only mention of this role by nongovernment news media is that the fines imposed on them contribute to facility’s operating costs.

WAN-IFRA encourages its constituency of online and print news publishers around the world to concentrate on helping local educators with some crucial, platform-agnostic elements of news literacy:

- > An understanding of the relationship between freedom of expression and freedom of the press and the importance and fragility of both.

- > A chance to come face-to-face with the work of journalism through interaction with the people who do it.

- > An opportunity to sample doing journalism, even for a few hours, to practice some reporter skills that will also serve in strengthening news participation, consumption and sharing.

This work recognizes and publicizes excellence in these areas and others by news pub-

lishers in our annual World Young Reader Prize awards, encourages school-publisher partnerships that teach news literacy while giving some value added to publishers, and offers basic resources to adapt to local conditions.

In the long term, news literacy work by publishers often works best as a joint effort. To encourage this approach, WAN-IFRA has designated 16 of its member news media associations as “Centers of Youth Engagement Excellence” for their effective, enduring and evolving programs and groundbreaking activities to help young people better use and navigate the news. These centres are in Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Norway, The Netherlands, and the USA.

Their actions vary but all have the goal of promoting news literacy. For example, The Netherlands has organized a traveling Road Show of face-to-face student-journalist debates about freedom of expression. Finland just did new research on how 13- to 15-year-olds assess the reliability of various sources and then created new tools for examining source criticism in news and in social media and how journalism differs from other kinds of content.

Sometimes a joint global initiative can help newsrooms connect in new ways with local young people. One recent WAN-IFRA global campaign challenged editors to give control of some or even the entire main news offer as part of a “World Teenage News Takeover,” with the help of a guide explaining how others had done so. Editors reported an appreciation of the students, and the students got an up-close-and-personal understanding of how hard it can be to get it right when doing news work. The guide for the campaign detailed how publishers in five countries had approached the idea. A second WAN-IFRA guide outside the campaign - based on a Finnish original - offers help for the reverse activity: a journalist going into the classroom.

Some news literacy practitioners emphasize that they are not in the business of teaching journalism. However, offering children and teenagers the chance to do professional journalism for an hour, a day or a week provides very memorable lessons. Reporting is fun, scary and demanding, and there’s nothing like trying it even for a very short time to appreciate all of that. Newsrooms staffs also learn from this activity as working with young people breaks stereotypes about them. One recent WAN-IFRA international project aimed to do both: The My Dream Interview Festival. The initiative was first done nationally in Hungary and Chile by two of WAN-IFRA’s Centers of Excellence. In the WAN-IFRA international version, teachers in eight other countries used a special guide for teaching about journalistic interviews to help groups of teenagers create interview questions for someone inspiring to them. A partner local newspaper chose the best set of questions, helped make the interview happen and published the result. Few students chose to talk to the film and music stars or athletes they were assumed to admire. Instead, they tended toward activists as the people about whom they wanted to learn more.

All of this activity is part of a continuing effort to encourage news publishers to take young people seriously and to help them learn about news: what it is, who does it, its limitations, its power and how they can get involved. We do this because we believe it’s good for their businesses, good for journalism and good for creating civic-minded, media-savvy citizens who can create and encourage a democratic way of life all over the world.

## Reference

Mihailidis, P. (2008). Beyond Cynicism: How media literacy can make students more engaged citizens. A report for the World Association of Newspapers (WAN). Paris, France. October 2008: <http://www.wan-press.org/article17925.htm>

# News literacy: Ever had someone say, ‘I’ll know it when I see it’?

## Or When news literacy takes center stage

Wendy Wallace, Faculty, Grants Manager, Poynter Institute

**My son joined me recently at a celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Pulitzer Prizes. The evening event, organized by The Poynter Institute, chronicled the impact of social justice journalism through the decades. We heard how white newspaper editors in the South took stands against segregation and decried lynchings and brutality, risking their livelihoods and their safety for what they knew was right.**

On the way home, my son shared how impressed he was, how moved and inspired. This from a 15-year-old who dozed off during a Cirque du Soleil acrobatics and special effects arena show a few weeks before.

A student of history, he knew the context for these discrete acts of bravery but not these details. I doubt he had given thought to the role journalism played in influencing or accelerating change. The passion of the editors, the power of their language and the visceral nature of the images on the screen above the stage captivated him.

I thought then how powerful that message would be for young people -- even old people -- everywhere as news organizations struggle to find sustainability. That night was the most powerful news literacy experience I could have crafted for my son. He heard, saw and felt the impact of journalism and the role of the journalist. Narrators, actors and singers shared the words, music, ideas, enterprise and courage of Pulitzer winners. My son saw how society changed because of brave reporters and editors who wrote about the even braver African-American men and women who dared defy the status quo of segregation and violence.

I reflected on that evening when I read the articles in this journal. Two years ago, I organized a News Literacy Summit for the Robert R. McCormick Foundation. We looked back at five years of news literacy initiatives and tried to galvanize disparate interests to help the movement gain traction. Interest in news literacy was growing, but not fast enough.

My takeaway from hearing the students, teachers, journalists, and advocates for media literacy, news literacy and civic literacy at that summit was that we needed to give educators resources to bring the news into their classrooms and communities. I also came to the realization that student media, a passion of mine since I was my son’s age, could be the Trojan Horse that gets news literacy into the schools. Could we broaden involvement in school media -- engage students across campus through crowdsourced articles and live Tweeting the football game -- so that by acting as journalists they could more fully appreciate journalism?

The articles in this journal reflect good progress since that summit in 2014.

This issue chronicles projects in the United States and around the world to give students real-world journalism experience, as Aralynn McMane and Renee Hobbs describe.