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.”

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


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-

Invited essays