

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

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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.

Article authors wrestle with how to teach news literacy and how much “context” should wrap around the skills of sourcing and identifying bias so commonly (and vitally) taught. One study, by Megan Fromm and Caleb O’Brien, began as a precursor to the summit.

Research in this journal depicts young people’s views about journalists and their habits in consuming news.

And more than one piece addresses head on the relationship between news literacy and media literacy, a discussion that generated more than one moment of tension in that hotel meeting room in Chicago.

I wish more students had experienced the Pulitzer event that captivated my son. Not intended as a news literacy event, yet it was - a celebration of journalism and why it matters. We didn’t hear about bias or sourcing, tools for teaching news literacy. It was aspirational. It showed the impact journalism has when done bravely and done right. And isn’t that the lesson? Isn’t that why news matters?

At the event, in an airy 1926 Christian Science church converted to a performing arts hall, an actor performed Atticus Finch’s closing argument from “To Kill a Mockingbird,” a Pulitzer winner for fiction. We heard a troubadour sing, “The times, they are a-changin’,” representing Bob Dylan’s honorary Pulitzer (technically a citation). The evening ended with the Power of Song Community Choir, Congressman John Lewis of Georgia and Poynter Vice President Roy Peter Clark holding hands on stage singing, “We shall overcome,” as the audience sang along.

My son told me on the car ride home he considered joining the group on stage for that finale. Had he, then this erstwhile news literacy event would have converted understanding and appreciation into action. May the work of these researchers and advocates find comparable success.

How do they keep all this stuff straight?

Mark Baldwin, Executive Editor, Rockford Register Star and the Journal-Standard

How do they keep all this stuff straight? That’s my first thought whenever Beloit College releases its annual Mindset List. The list, published each year at the start of the academic year, is a compilation of the cultural touchstones that inform the world view of entering college freshman.

The Mindset List for members of the Class of 2019, who started college last fall, included these gems:

- They have never licked a postage stamp;
- They have grown up treating Wi-Fi as an entitlement;
- Charlton Heston is recognized for waving a rifle over his head as much as for waving his staff over the Red Sea;
- Color photos have always adorned the front page of The New York Times.

The full list comprises 50 items.

When I started college, in 1975, the list wasn’t nearly so long. The cultural dialogue was dominated by the lingering effects of Watergate and the fall of Saigon. Love was keeping the Captain and Tennille together. Walter Payton was a Chicago Bears rookie. A mechanical shark called Bruce had propelled “Jaws” to the top of the box office.

The Mindset List underscores what most of us understand intuitively — namely, that thanks to digital technology, there’s more information available in more forms than at any time in history. And therein lies a problem.

Not every drop from the digital fire hose is as important as every other. Worse yet, not everything is true. We’ve all seen urban legends whip around the world in seconds.

And that’s why news literacy matters, or ought to matter, to news organizations and the communities they serve.

To be sure, there’s a bit of healthy self-interest involved. A news literate community provides a built-in competitive advantage for our rapidly evolving, multiplatform industry, which faces challenges from competitors whose standards of verification and fair play are nowhere near ours but that attract large audiences nevertheless.

If we can work with local educators to provide students the tools they need to become effective consumers of information, we will plant the seeds for a new, younger audience of news consumers. And so, in Rockford, we’ve assembled a coalition of the willing, drawn from local public and parochial high schools, to work toward embedding news literacy training in their courses.

It simply makes good business sense.

But at least two other values are in play as well that relate directly to the traditional newspaper mission of First Amendment journalism and thought leadership: good citizenship and dialogue.

The skills taught by the news literacy movement are essential to citizenship in a democracy. They boil down to questions we all ought to ask about the information we receive: