

## Beyond Media Literacy

Münster

Deadline: Apr 22, 2022

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Deadline for abstracts: April 22, 2022

Deadline for articles: November 25, 2022

Today, media literacy, digital media literacy, media and information literacy, critical media literacy, media literacy education, and the like, are hot topics discussed from elementary schools to UNESCO and a whole industry of non-profits has sprung up in response. One thing that these programs seem to share is a focus on content, and on spotting bias and manipulation in terms of content creators and purveyors. But there is much more to media than meets the eye. If you approach the idea of education around media from a McLuhan perspective, that is, by paying attention to form, structure, environment, and the resulting "personal and social consequences" (McLuhan, 1964), you must go beyond mere literacy, beyond content.

Marshall McLuhan, who spent his career trying to understand and educate the world about the effects of technologies, insisted for three decades that "the medium is the message," (McLuhan, 1958) because "it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action. The content or uses of such media are as diverse as they are ineffectual in shaping the form of human association." (McLuhan, 1964) He put it plainly and provocatively:

„I am in the position of Louis Pasteur telling doctors that their greatest enemy was quite invisible, and quite unrecognized by them. Our conventional response to all media, namely that it is how they are used that counts, is the numb stance of the technological idiot. For the „content“ of a medium is like the juicy piece of meat carried by the burglar to distract the watchdog of the mind. The effect of the medium is made strong and intense just because it is given another medium as „content.“ The content of a movie is a novel or a play or an opera. The effect of the movie form is not related to its program content. The „content“ of writing or print is speech, but the reader is almost entirely unaware either of print or of speech.“ (McLuhan, 1964)

“The section on “the medium is the message” can, perhaps, be clarified by pointing out that any technology gradually creates a totally new human environment. Environments are not passive wrappings but active processes.” (McLuhan, 1964, introduction to the second edition (McLuhan, 1966))

In this volume, the editors seek the limits of media literacies, and to go beyond them. To imagine

what an approach would look like were we to ignore the content and take on the media themselves as both objects and forms of attention and education. We are not attacking these various media literacies, as they can serve a useful purpose—by all means, we should be aware of marketing and propaganda and other manipulations—but searching for a complimentary effort which takes on the medium (as environment) itself as the message to make sense of. The different contributions can focus on the whole variety of the understanding of media form and content to explore the range of media literacies. The editors would like to invite authors from very different disciplines like media theory and ecology, educational theory, philosophy, sociology, cultural studies, art and design, artistic research, image science, semiotics, phenomenology, art history, game studies, visual culture studies, computer graphics and other research areas related to the understanding of media in general.

The official deadline for abstracts is April 22, 2022. Long abstracts should have 600 to 900 words in length. Please send a short biography, contact details and your abstract to the editors Prof. Dr. Lars C. Grabbe, Andrew McLuhan and Tobias Held via: [l.grabbe@fh-muenster.de](mailto:l.grabbe@fh-muenster.de). The official deadline for the completed articles is November 25, 2022. The articles should be 5.000 to 6.000 words in length. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the managing editors via mail.

#### References:

McLuhan, Marshall. 1958. Speech to the British Columbia Association of Educational Broadcasters. University of British Columbia.

McLuhan, Marshall. 1964. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

McLuhan, Marshall. 1966. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, Introduction to the second edition.

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#### Reference:

CFP: Beyond Media Literacy. In: ArtHist.net, Dec 10, 2021 (accessed Sep 17, 2025), <https://arthist.net/archive/35517>.