



*And now,
press the
red button....*

A Guide to Media Literacy - what it is,
and why we need to know more about it

Acknowledgements:

This guide to media literacy has been produced by NIACE (The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education - England and Wales) to help inform its partners, colleagues and learning providers working with adult learners - young and old and in all their diversity - in communities across the country.

NIACE is the leading non-government organisation for adult learning and exists to encourage more and different adults to engage in learning of all kinds. It campaigns for, and celebrates the achievements of, all adult learners.

This guide has been produced for Adult Learners' Week 2005 which is core-funded by:

department for
education and skills
creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence



EUROPEAN UNION
European Social Fund



This publication has been made possible with the particular support of:

- Ofcom – set up by the Government as the regulator for the UK communications industries, with responsibilities across television, radio, telecommunications and wireless communications services. www.ofcom.org.uk/
- The European Social Fund (ESF) – a European Union initiative that invests in people. Its purpose is to help people improve their skills and enter jobs, especially those who are at the greatest disadvantage in the labour market. www.esf.gov.uk

Researched and written by Viva Communications Limited, www.viva-communications.co.uk
email: info@viva-communications.co.uk

Designed and printed by Rich Designs.
Tel: 01623 741 741 or email: info@richdesigns.co.uk

Photography and images:
www.hollisphotography.com

with special thanks to: • British Film Institute
• BBC • East Coast Media • Youth Times
• Tenantspin • WORLDwrite

National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (England and Wales) www.niace.org.uk

21 De Montfort Street, Leicester, LE1 7GE Company registration No. 260 3322 Charity registration No. 1002775

And now, press the **red** button...

“If the UK is to be a healthier, livelier and fairer society it needs citizens who can play a full part in its economic, social, cultural and political life. To ensure such participation, everyone now needs to be literate not only in printed media, but in all forms of electronic media. Acquiring these skills enables people to be questioning and responsive as audiences, active democratic participants, knowledgeable consumers and, in some cases, imaginative and adventurous practitioners too”

Statement from the Media Literacy Task Force



Foreword *by Lord Puttnam, CBE*

It's become something of a commonplace to assert that we inhabit a world in which the electronic media surround us at every turn. But it's worth reminding ourselves of the sheer extent to which our world is now increasingly defined through the medium of information and data.

The advent of digital technology has spawned a multitude of different platforms and devices for delivering content, whether in the form of entertainment, or information - ranging from digital television, mobiles, PDAs, Personal Video Recorders, I-Pods, with audio *and* photo capacity - it's a list that gets longer every day.

Young people are growing up in a world in which such a multitude of platforms is absolutely taken for granted - they've never really known things any different.

Many older people find themselves only reluctantly, and with difficulty (sometimes, as in my case, with great difficulty), adapting to a world increasingly organised in the form of bits and bytes.

But all of us, whether we like it or not, share one thing in common - we inhabit a world literally saturated by media. And an increasing proportion of that media is digital in nature.

In such a world media literacy is more important than ever.

Media literacy is about creating something positive - it is about empowering people by providing them with the cultural awareness, the critical knowledge and creative skills which will help them to understand the way the media shapes the way in which we view the world. At its heart media literacy is about audiences. By developing analytical skills among people of all ages and encouraging participation, media literacy can only contribute to the cultural and creative stock of the nation.

This guide is a tool which helps explain what media literacy is, why it matters and why its importance can only continue to grow over the coming years.

Lord Puttnam, CBE
April 2005

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What is Media Literacy?

“...the ability to access, analyse and respond (critically) to, and benefit from, a range of media”

- NIACE

“Media Literacy is the ability to access, understand and create communications in a variety of contexts”

- The Office of Communications, Ofcom

“Media Literacy at the dawn of the 21st century is about encouraging a more flexible and critical mind. A more flexible and critical mind creates a better citizen, a better human being”

- writer Bonnie Greer

“...media literacy is important for everyone and should therefore be accessible to all. The capacity to understand and engage with electronic media adds value to the lives of people who have this set of skills”

- the Community Media Association



Did You Know?

More young people have voted in reality TV shows than are likely to vote at the next election, according to a survey for the Daily Telegraph.

As you can see from the quotes on the left, the concept of media literacy is still being debated, defined and redefined. But why are so many people talking about it? Because developments in digital technology have put media literacy firmly on the political agenda.

In 2001 the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's policy statement on media literacy stated: "With an increased awareness of the importance of media literacy, there is an environment developing that should be more receptive to a structured learning programme designed to inculcate critical viewing skills. Beyond these, broadcasters and other service providers need to start thinking about their own responsibility to foster well-informed and critical viewers."

Ofcom, the new independent regulator for the UK communications industries, has a legal duty to promote media literacy under the Communications Act 2003.

And a debate has opened up among all those who feel they have a stake in the Brave New World of digital communication.

Channel 4, the BBC, the UK Film Council and the British Film Institute launched the Media Literacy Task Force, which held a seminar in 2004 attended by the media industry, Government, education and other agencies.

The seminar, addressed by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Rt Hon Tessa Jowell, MP, concluded that: "If the UK is to be a healthier, livelier and fairer society it needs citizens who can play a full part in its economic, social, cultural and political life. To ensure such participation, everyone now needs to be literate not only in printed media, but in all forms of electronic media. Acquiring these skills enables people to be questioning and responsive as audiences, active democratic participants, knowledgeable consumers and, in some cases, imaginative and adventurous practitioners too."

Why is Media Literacy so important?



Never before has the broadcast media offered us so much choice. With the development of digital television, we have access to potentially hundreds of channels offering 24-hour films, news and current affairs, sport, soaps, documentaries and educational programmes. And technology increasingly gives us TV on demand, allowing us to customise what we watch and when we choose to watch it.

With the advent of interactive television we are no longer a passive audience. “Press the red button” has now entered the vernacular, as viewers use their remote controls to access information, choose camera angles in a football match or vote for contestants in a quiz show. And increasingly, we are seeing technologies converge with some digital services providing internet access through the TV set.

Viewers with internet access can go online after programmes to “chat” with celebrities or obtain further information on a particular issue. As well as interactively accessing programmes, they can shop, bet, play games or e-mail. Potentially they can even use their remote control to vote in a general election.

But at its heart the media literacy issue is not about entertainment. It is about empowerment – about media users’ ability to take control of what they watch and the information they can access. And with the internet now one huge marketplace, informed consumers can buy or sell, research reviews on goods and services, and shop around for the cheapest mortgages or the best car deals. The uninformed lose out.

This is why media literacy is so important. Ofcom has said: “media-literate people are able to make informed choices about what they watch and the services they use. They’re able to take advantage of the full range of opportunities offered by new communications technologies, and are better able to protect themselves and their families from harmful or offensive material.”

Media literacy could soon be seen as crucial a skill as literacy and numeracy. The Media Literacy Task Force seminar heard that, given the considerable increase in the range of choices, “media literacy skills would....not simply be an option but an essential life-skill for full participation in contemporary society.”

The Digital Divide

Did You Know?

Women remain under-represented in the audio-visual industries, according to research by Skillset, the industries' sector skills council.

Broadcasters have suggested that switchover from analogue to digital TV could be completed by 2012. But despite the deadline, just over 40 per cent of the UK population still have no access to multi-channel television, according to Ofcom.

A 2004 NIACE paper *What is Media Literacy and Why Does It Matter?* by Professor Naomi E Sargant, vice-chairman of the MediaWise Trust and member of the NIACE Company Board, found that women, those aged 55 and over and the lowest socio-economic groups, had the lowest levels of access.

Similarly, 54 per cent of adults own a computer and 51 per cent have access to the Internet. But Internet access drops to 23 per cent for those aged 65-74, and six per cent for those aged 75 and over. A survey of viewer satisfaction with the choice and variety on their available channels also found higher levels of dissatisfaction among older people. It finds that little digital programming has been aimed at older viewers, despite the fact that there are more people over 60 than under 16.

“It is not acceptable yet to assume, as much of the media already do, that everyone has immediate access to the Internet and its associated activity,” says Naomi Sargant. “It is quite discouraging for such groups who are typically heavy TV viewers to be continually told that they can follow up programmes on broadcasters’ websites.”



BBC NEWS | In Depth | 2004 | Asia quake disaster

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/world/2004/asia_quake_disaster/default.stm

bbc.co.uk

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BBC NEWS UK EDITION

WATCH BBC NEWS IN VIDEO

In Depth **TSUNAMI DISASTER**

Last Updated: Friday, 8 April, 2005, 06:58 GMT 07:08 UK

Tsunami: Anatomy of a disaster

An account of the Asian tsunami disaster based on scientific research and survivors' stories.

SUMATRA EARTHQUAKE

- Quake-hit islanders plead for aid
- Quake-hit island faces shortages
- Indonesia aid effort gathers pace
- Quake prompts speedy alerts

HAVE YOUR SAY

In tsunami recovery on track?

After the wave
A Thai woman tells of life after the tsunami in sound and pictures

BBC NEWS: VIDEO AND AUDIO
Watch video reports on the Asia quake devastation

THREE MONTHS ON

- Thailand's tsunami-hit tourism
- Thais find new ways to survive
- How diseases were curbed
- The mental health legacy
- Sri Lankan tussle over aid
- Aceh looks to new political future
- Rebuilding Thai drowned island

ANALYSIS

Indonesia chance

SURVIVORS' STORIES

Miracle woman

AID EFFORT

Post mortems

In pictures
A Sri Lankan family returns for the first time to a lost home

It's all gone!
Thai resort manager tells how her livelihood was washed away

Wiped out
Aidless Thai resumes 300 relatives killed in tsunami disaster

Animated guide: The tsunami explained

How a massive earthquake in the Indian Ocean triggered sea surges and the deaths of thousands of people.

KEY GUIDES

- At-a-glance: Countries hit
- At-a-glance: Economic impact
- Maps: Trail of the disaster
- Audio gallery: Tsunami disaster
- Timeline: How events unfolded
- Logistics: Delivering the aid

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www.bbc.co.uk

Viewers could watch it unfold at any hour, see it from the perspective of news networks around the globe, and make donations by pressing the red button.

What were you doing on Boxing Day?

In the 2005 Huw Weldon Memorial Lecture, Dawn Airey, Managing Director of Sky Networks, staunchly defended digital television against criticism that it offers little change and that the concept of choice is an illusion.

Her retort was “what were you doing on Boxing Day 2004?” And she went on: “...coverage of the Tsunami was remarkable not simply for being available 24 hours a day. It was the way in which modern interactive news shaped public opinion and, as a direct consequence, public policy.”

Much of the news coverage relied on home video footage and news broadcasts included text messages from survivors, telling family and friends that they were safe. Viewers could watch it unfold at any hour, see it from the perspective of news networks around the globe, and make donations by pressing the red button.

It demonstrated that news coverage is no longer just the preserve of media professionals – as interactive technology now allows the public to make a greater contribution. And in an age when you can access coverage of conflict by news channels around the world from CNN to al-Jazeera, it becomes more crucial than ever that viewers are critically aware, so that they can discriminate between fact, fiction and opinion.

This is especially true of the Internet and the surge in popularity of web logging or blogging. Blogging is posting a diary or journal on a web page - anyone can

write and publish anything about any subject they choose. While it democratises journalism, blogging is also unmediated – there is no editorial control. Yet blogging has entered the mainstream – in 2002 a 29-year-old Iraqi calling himself Salam Pax wrote his own journal on a website. His ‘Baghdad Blogger’s’ account of life during the Iraq War gained an avid readership online and was serialised in the Guardian newspaper.

Broadcasters have recognised the growing importance of the public voice in news coverage. The BBC now uses regular feedback contributions via text messages and e-mail both on radio and on its news website, now a well-used forum for people to have their say on topical issues. In the run up to the 2005 general election, for example, it asked a panel of UK voters to share their views on a range of issues in text and video using their mobile phones.

Sylvia Hines, head of New Service Development at the BBC, said: “We’ve spent quite a lot of time thinking what does media literacy mean for the BBC and why is it important and relevant to us. We feel it’s about making people active citizens not only in a digital Britain, but in any media saturated society.

“News coverage of the Tsunami, for example, was hugely enriched by the experiences of people who were there. It’s now becoming a much more porous media in that sense. The challenge is to make sure authorship is available to everybody rather than just the digitally savvy few, so that we genuinely have a full range of voices.”

***At a time when people can receive vast amounts of information about the world
...how do they ensure that they can distinguish between fact and opinion?***

Heather Rabbatts, Managing Director of 4Learning.

Adult Education and Media Literacy

Did You Know?

People spend well over three hours a day watching television on average, according to NIACE's survey of adult learners in 2004. 87 per cent of women and 82 per cent of men say they watch TV every day.

The broadcast media has had a long association with adult education, with its roots in Lord Reith's remit for the BBC, to "educate, inform and entertain." A continuum runs from the first education programmes for adults, through the first Open University broadcasts in 1971, to the BBC Computer Literacy project in the Eighties, to the launch of the BBC Education website in 1998.

The recent Department for Media, Culture and Sport Green Paper on the future of the BBC reinforces the association with education, including it among its "core public purposes" – "stimulating our interest in and knowledge of a full range of subjects and issues through content that is accessible and can encourage either formal or informal learning," and by "providing specialist educational programmes and accompanying material to facilitate learning at all levels and for all ages".

Channel 4 also has its education division – 4Learning, with broadcast output enhanced by its Web services. Radio is also a good provider of media literacy, with local and national stations providing phone-ins for the public.

The growth of multi-channel TV has further potential for bringing distance learning opportunities into people's living rooms. A study by the Learning and

Skills Development Agency in 2003 – Interactive TV – a learning platform with potential – predicted that digital TV will become the dominant means of accessing information and services in the home, and explored its potential as a learning medium.

With the growth of electronic media, NIACE has recognised the increasing importance of media literacy to adult learners. In its response to Ofcom's strategy for the promotion of media literacy, NIACE argues that media literate people should be able to cope with new developments, in that they should be able to transfer their relevant learning and experience to new technologies "with the confidence and capacity to be independent learners."

Education has played a huge role in creating a better skilled and more computer-literate workforce. And while most work on media literacy to date has focused on the needs of children and schools, the learning needs and interests of adults are equally important, says NIACE.

There are many opportunities for learning providers to work with the media to give adults skills to use media production technology, to foster critical thinking and to help bridge the digital "generation gap".



We want active, informed consumers, able to take decisions for themselves and their families based on judgement and on understanding.

Tessa Jowell, Secretary of State for Culture, Media & Sport.

NIACE – and its Cardiff-based office, NIACE Dysgu Cymru - is working in partnership with Ofcom to promote media literacy activities for Adult Learners' Week 2005 and beyond. They want to encourage learning providers to offer media literacy taster sessions – for example, helping learners to set up TV or film discussion groups, or offering them the chance to try out digital cameras and editing equipment.

As well as further education colleges and the community and voluntary sector, libraries are key partners in providing Adult Learners' Week events, and have a potential role in promoting media literacy. Many are now learning centres for leardirect/UK Online, and given that libraries have a head start over many organisations in giving the public access to information technology, NIACE is looking to work with them to further develop public access to media literacy.

The case studies highlighted in this guide show that by working together, education providers and the media can help adults to not only be informed citizens and consumers, but to take part confidently in creating programmes for radio or television, to contribute to and debate local issues and to make their voices heard through the arts.

Heather Rabbatts, Managing Director of 4Learning, Channel 4's education division, and chair of the Media Literacy Task Force, says the digital revolution represents enormous opportunities for learners.

"It isn't the role of the broadcasters, the British Film Institute or the UK Film Council to replace the education system," she said, "but in conjunction with the education system to find a way of contributing to how people learn and understand the world."



A Tenantspin resident gets to grips with technology

“ *Television is the first truly democratic culture - the first culture available to everybody and entirely governed by what the people want. The most terrifying thing is what people do want.* ”

New York Times critic Clive Barnes

Did You Know?

When asked how they usually find out what's going to be on TV, NIACE's survey found that newspapers are the most important for age groups aged 45 and over. The electronic guide is most important for the younger age groups.

► Case Study

For further information see www.tenantspin.org

Towerblock TV

Did You Know?

Fewer than 42 per cent of first-time voters think they will vote for a political party, yet 46 per cent have already voted for contestants in shows like Big Brother and Pop Idol.

Kath Healy had never imagined that her interest in amateur film-making would one day lead to her making television programmes.

A retired civil servant, she is one of the founding members of Tenantspin – a TV station run by the tenants of Liverpool’s tower blocks and broadcast on the internet.

“I had been very interested in the video camera for a number of years, but I couldn’t edit properly,” she says. “That was the initial reason I got involved – I was interested in the camera work. Once or twice I have been on the interviewing side, but I must admit I prefer to be behind the camera rather than in front of it.”

The station was started five years ago by the Foundation for Art and Creative Technology (FACT) in partnership with Liverpool Housing Action Trust, amid plans to regenerate the city’s 67 high-rise blocks.

“The majority of residents are now pensioners who had moved in as young couples in the Sixties,” says Alan Dunn, the programme’s manager. “There was a sense that we needed to increase tenant participation and consultation.”

The project trained tenants – most of them over 50 - in studio management, production, research

and presentation. It uses the Superchannel system – a facility developed by Danish artists which gives community groups a forum on the internet.

Tenants now run their own TV channel making live webcasts and archiving programmes to access on the internet. So far they have made over 300 shows.

Much of the programme content is about social housing issues, but FACT also commissions writers and artists to work with residents.

From the summer of 2005 Tenantspin will have its own studio in a new community centre next to refurbished tower blocks, and FACT hopes to negotiate broadband access for all the flats.

The scheme has attracted some publicity – tenants have found themselves interviewed for features on local and national radio, television and newspapers.

For Kath Healy, the project has demystified much of what she sees in the media. “We went to watch the Kilroy show to learn a little bit from that, but it was really just a glorified attempt at what we were doing ourselves. Robert Kilroy-Silk looked just as nervous as we did before he started.”



“

*George Bush (senior) when asked how he would like his presidency to be remembered:
**One in which every adult American was educated well enough to
be able to programme the clock timer on his video recorder.***

”

▶ Case Study

For further information see www.worldwrite.org.uk



WORLDwrite

A charity in East London is training the documentary film-makers of tomorrow, while encouraging young people to express their concerns about global issues.

WORLDwrite is an education charity whose mission is to challenge prejudices and stereotypes by offering young people exchange visits to throughout the world.

It also runs Shoot It - a 20-week training programme in documentary film-making at the WORLDwrite Volunteer Centre in Hackney. The course is free to anyone up to the age of 25 or unemployed, but gives priority to volunteers working with the charity.

During the OCN (Open College Network) accredited evening course, trainees produce a documentary film which must be on a global or equality issue.

The charity helps them develop ideas and trains them in a range of skills, including script writing, working with digital cameras, budgeting, editing, producing and writing.

“We have lots of exchange programmes and so we have lots of partners around the world,” says Vivien Regan, WORLDwrite’s assistant director.

“So what we really do is to challenge prejudices and contemporary myths here in the UK and the West about what people want in the developing world.”

Finished documentaries get an airing on a local community cable television channel and local film festivals.

The charity is also developing links with schools and colleges, and giving students access to established producers and directors.

The aim is to develop the course to give progression into documentary film making, while raising awareness of global issues.

One film crew is travelling to Ghana to make a film about the country, its people and their expectations.

Another is just finishing a documentary about Fairtrade, taking a critical look at the scheme and what it means for subsistence farmers in the developing world.

Viv Regan said “WORLDwrite has an open door policy for young volunteers in London and is passionate about global equality. Many of the young people have little sense that they could get on in further education.”

• *This project was winner of an Adult Learners’ Week New Learning Opportunities Award in 2004*

► Case Study

For further information see www.fodradio.org

Making waves in the forest

In March 2005, Ofcom awarded Forest of Dean Radio a five-year licence to broadcast– the first amid a wave of applications for community broadcasting licences from around the country.

It is a great accolade for the station, which has grown out of community development programmes in the relatively disadvantaged Forest towns.

Forest of Dean community radio started in 1995 with a three-day broadcast to coincide with Cinderford Carnival. Since then the project has completed 16 weekend broadcasts in six towns – Cinderford, Coleford, Lydney, Newent, Sedbury and Mitcheldean.

A big part of the radio station's work involves liaising with young people and adults to teach them how to make their own radio programmes.

“Traditionally our approach has been to work with people, asking what sort of things do you want to do, then working

with them to give them the skills to do it,” says the station's output and training co-ordinator Jason Griffiths.

“Somebody might have an idea to cover something they're involved in, whether it's a club or just something they have a particular interest in.

“We can teach them everything from the technical side, operating recording equipment or running the studio desk, to how to plan and research programmes. It's all taught on the job because we feel that's the best way to learn.”

The result is that most of the station's output comes from volunteers. Its programmes cover everything from classical, folk music and jazz, to local bands, sport and shows debating local issues.

“It's real community radio,” says Jason Griffiths. “It's not made by some radio people – it's radio made by the people of the area for the people of the area. It certainly gives the area its own voice.”

Technology... the knack of so arranging the world that we don't have to experience it

Max Frisch, Swiss author and playwright

► Case Study



Skills for life in print

A group of adult learners in Birmingham have published their own magazine to help boost their confidence with the written word.

The group produced their publication, Trittiford Smarty Bunch Magazine, complete with features, poems, book reviews, puzzles and recipes.

Most of the contributors had been on basic literacy courses, working towards entry level Skills for Life qualifications. Last summer they came together for a ten-hour course to design and write the magazine.

It involved them using their improved skills to write articles, transfer them to computer and design their pages.

“They are incredibly proud of it,” said tutor Gill Ambler. “They feel it should go on sale to the public.”

The Trittiford Magazine Group run by Birmingham Adult Education service was nominated for an Adult Learners’ Week award in 2005.

A poem published in the Trittiford Smarty Bunch Magazine:

Waiting - Ernest Day

*Sitting on the bench waiting for it
I know that it is coming
It will come
It always does
A bird starts to sing
It’s on the way
It’s coming
Today and for ever
More songs it is coming nearer
It has broken
It is dawn*

► Case Study

For further information see www.bfi.org.uk/education/

Screen Dreams



Screen Dreams is an intergenerational project run by the British Film Institute (bfi), which brings together older volunteers in the community with young people in schools.

It allows children to compare their cinema-going experience with that of a different generation, bringing youth and experience together to both share old memories and create new ones.

The bfi says it encourages the exploration of film as an art form, but also as an historically important form of entertainment – part of our cultural heritage which can be shared by young and old alike.

The use of reminiscence work has many benefits for older people, including encouraging sociability, providing enjoyment and helping to preserve cultural heritage.

Did You Know?

When asked how satisfied they were with the choice and variety offered on their channels, 29 per cent said they were not satisfied. Men were the most dissatisfied, along with a third of all groups aged 45 and over. Even those with multiple channels record 25 per cent as being dissatisfied.

And cinema is a particularly good subject for intergenerational reminiscence work, says Marysia Lachowicz, bfi Education's development officer for lifelong learning.

"To many older people, cinema has been such a hugely important part of their lives," she said. "They enjoy talking about the cinema and seeing old films again, remembering those times, and talking about the social aspect of going to the cinema."

Since 2001 bfi Education has also set up and run Classic Film Clubs, which allow people aged over 60 to realise the potential of their personal memories of cinema-going, and to nurture their understanding of film culture.

One club at O'Grady Court, a sheltered housing scheme in West London, is now up and running independently. The club allows older residents to watch and discuss classic old films from the Fifties and Sixties, including musicals and Ealing comedies. But it also shows modern films, such as the Lord of the Rings trilogy, and Asian cinema.

"They enjoy the reminiscence element. Talking about film-going, where they went to see it and who they went with is always a large part of the discussion," said sheltered housing officer Birgit Huhn.

"It's a good memory they can share with other people, so it's quite therapeutic."

► Case Study

For further information see www.eastcoastmedia.co.uk

Scaffolder scales new heights



Richard Blewitt thought his working life was over after a gas explosion left him disabled.

But just two years later, the former scaffolder has gone from building sites to hopes of a new career in the media thanks to a mobile media training unit run by the Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education.

East Coast Media, part of the college, won funding from UK Online, Single Regeneration Budget, European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund to buy and equip three mobile media units.

Since December 2002 these mobile studios have gone out into communities in North East Lincolnshire and helped over 1000 people to gain media skills.

A team of media facilitators help those in the community to make their own TV programmes, which can be broadcast on the local community television, Channel 7.

For 32-year-old Richard Blewitt, the opportunity has brought a whole new lease of life. He says that making TV programmes about the local community helps him express his artistic talents, develop his skills and broaden employment opportunities.

He has produced programmes for Turning Point – a disability media awareness group which produces a monthly magazine show called In Focus, for Channel 7.

And he is currently taking an Open College Network-accredited Level 1 course in TV production and interviewing skills, and hopes to work for the BBC.

“I was interested in camcorders, but I’d never picked one up before,” says Richard. “I never dreamed of what it would lead to. It’s opened so many doors for me.”

East Coast Media’s mobile studios have enabled people to make programmes about community groups, promoting them to a wider audience through Channel 7.

Programmes produced have included a mini pop video, film to accompany work by local poets, a programme about local martial arts clubs, and a short feature about a refuge for homeless and rehabilitating drug users.

Last year East Coast Media won a Beacon Award for Lifelong Learning. The programme’s co-ordinator Deborah Cooper said: “There are many community groups and interest groups out there that want to tell other people in our area what they’re doing and this is a fantastic medium for them.

“We have gone out there, talked to them about what interests them and given them training which can lead on to qualifications. We have had people who have done something with us, and then gone on to all manner of different training courses.”

► Case Study

For further information see www.ruralmedia.co.uk



Youth Times

With its shop front access point in Hereford city centre, the Youth Times is in a prime position to attract young people with an interest in learning media skills.

The project was launched last year and already involves 300 people in creating an online magazine called InSITE.

But as well as giving young people skills in journalism, photography and new media, the scheme is also helping to address a shortage of qualified youth workers in Hereford.

The InSITE magazine is run by an eight-strong young editorial team and is aimed at the 14,000 young people aged 13-25 in rural Herefordshire.

Stories covered in the latest issue included a local skate park under threat of closure, and a tongue-in-cheek article on how Hereford Leisure Centre is to be overlooked in bids to host the next Olympics.

The editorial team also get local councillors to do the “sofa challenge”, quizzing them on issues including poor rural transport and the need for more entertainment facilities.

“For the young people, a project like Youth Times is incredibly empowering,” says Nic Millington, founder of the Rural Media Company which launched the scheme.

“They’re publishing their own magazine, creating a product which gives them a voice.”

Its headquarters, The Press Office, is a drop-in centre for anyone interested in the project. Teenagers and young adults come in and learn to use resources like the broadband internet connection and digital cameras, and get support from media professionals in producing content for InSITE.

The project also aims to provide a pool of qualified media arts workers who can fill vacancies in the county youth service.

Working in partnership with the YMCA George Williams College in London, it offers Level 2 and 3 qualifications in youth and community work via distance learning.

“We have found that young people are asking for and are looking to engage in media skills, because they’re living in a media-saturated society, and we have an unskilled workforce unable to respond,” says Nic Millington. “Rather than finding youth workers with media skills, we have turned it on its head. We’re interested in taking media graduates, finding people who can edit and write, and introducing them to the community context of media.”

Emily Price, aged 19, is taking the youth work qualification after leaving school and deciding against

InSITE

www.insitemag.net



going to university. “I really love working with young people,” she says. “The people here have been teaching me how to write and edit stories, so that I can use those skills to help young people. I think it’s really important that young people can have a voice and write about what they want to write about.”

“For the young people, a project like Youth Times is incredibly empowering ... they’re publishing their own magazine, creating a product which gives them a voice.”

BBC Learning Centres

A partnership between the BBC and the further education sector is opening up learning opportunities to people who would not normally attend a college.

The partnership is part of the corporation's policy to widen public access to the media, with learning and drop-in centres throughout England, Wales and Scotland.

A new centre opened its doors in Gloucester in summer 2004. The centre is in the city's most deprived, multicultural ward, where learners are difficult to reach.

Broadcasting is democratic: there are no reserved seats.

*Lady Bridget Plowden,
educationalist and former
chair of the Independent
Broadcasting Authority.*

But BBC executives say the BBC brand is luring them in. "People will come in because they feel they have ownership of it," said Andy Griffee, controller of BBC English regions.

The new centre is run in partnership with Gloucestershire College of Arts and Technology, funded by Gloucestershire Learning and Skills Council, and the European Social Fund.

As well as boosting access to courses, the centre is also an outpost for BBC Radio Gloucestershire, aimed at giving people more involvement in radio programmes.



► *Case Study*

For further information see www.bbc.co.uk/wales/capturewales.
For similar projects in England see www.bbc.co.uk/tellinglives/

Capture Wales



Robert James recalls his childhood in Ebbw Vale, South Wales, and looks back at the closure of the area's steel works and coal mines in the Eighties.

“Why did Ebbw Vale become a deserted ghost town which a government didn't even try to hep?” he asks. “We lost the mines, steelworks, the railway service and a way of life.”

He vents his anger through a short self-made film, available on a BBC website. Anybody with internet access can log on and see his film and many others. In one, an anguished mother tells of her son's drug addiction, in another an artist tells folk tales from his native Abertridwr.

This is a digital storytelling project called Capture Wales, run by BBC Wales in partnership with the Centre for Journalism Studies at Cardiff University.

The project runs monthly workshops around Wales, working with members of the public to help them create digital stories.

Digital storytelling has taken the BBC's Video Nation idea a stage further. Whereas with the former people were given training and the BBC edited their films, in Capture Wales people are taught to do their own editing.

They choose their story, write their script and put it together with photos, simple animation, video, voice-over and music.



Because of the advent of multichannel television, we have had a greater opportunity to witness the world through the eyes of others or listen and judge for ourselves what it is they have to say.

Dawn Airey, Managing Director Sky Networks

Find out more....

Organisations:

- NIACE www.niace.org.uk
Adult Learners' Week www.alw.org.uk
and, in Wales, www.niacedc.org.uk
- ESF www.esf.gov.uk/
- DFES www.dfes.gov.uk/index.shtml
- Skillset – the sector skills council for the communications industries - www.skillset.org/
- The Office of Communications – Ofcom - www.ofcom.org.uk
- Community Media Association www.commedia.org.uk
- Voice of the Listener and Viewer www.vlv.org.uk/
- The Community Channel www.communitychannel.org/

Course Providers:

Are your media literacy courses featured in learndirect's learning opportunities database of around a million courses? You can check at www.hotcourses.com. If any of your courses are not listed, please e-mail enquiries@hotcourses.com. There is no charge for inclusion in the database. And learners who have enjoyed taster sessions and want to find out what they can do next, can call learndirect on **0800 100 900**.

Did You Know?

People spend well over three hours a day watching television on average, according to NIACE's survey of adult learners in 2004. 87 per cent of women and 82 per cent of men say they watch TV every day.

Research:

- ***A New Future for Communications*** (Communications White Paper) www.communicationswhitepaper.gov.uk
- ***Inform and Empower – Media Literacy in the 21st Century***. Report of a seminar organised by the UK Film Council with the British Film Institute, Channel 4 and the BBC in January 2004
- ***The UK Film Council*** www.ukfilmcouncil.org.uk/filmindustry/medialit/
- ***Interactive TV – a learning platform with potential*** (report by the Learning and Skills Development Agency) www.lsd.org.uk/files/PDF/1443.pdf
- ***What is Media Literacy and Why Does It Matter?*** by Professor Naomi E Sargant, NIACE 2004. For copies, e-mail alw@niace.org.uk.
- ***Business as usual...?*** The NIACE Survey on Adult Participation in Learning 2004 by Fiona Aldridge and Alan Tuckett www.niace.org.uk/publications
- ***Adult learning and social division: a persistent pattern*** by Naomi Sargant and Fiona Aldridge, NIACE 2002. www.niace.org.uk/publications





National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (England and Wales) www.niace.org.uk
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