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 IDENTIFIERS Media Now Project

ABSTRACT

The need has been established for classroom study of mass media form and content. As this need becomes more widely recognized, high quality, cost effective, and systematic educational materials must be developed. Teachers who possess characteristics and backgrounds amenable to media teaching must be trained in the use of these materials, and in media teaching techniques. More research on the effectiveness of media study programs (such as that done in the Media Now course evaluation project) is needed. Descriptions of several media study programs presently in operation are included in the text. (SIS)

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UNDERSTANDING THE MEDIA

Ron Curtis

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## UNDERSTANDING THE MEDIA

By Ron Curtis  
Director of Education,  
Southwest Iowa Learning  
Resources Center  
Red Oak, Iowa

### MEDIA STUDY: A BASIC (SURVIVAL) SKILL

The need to study and understand the effects of the mass media came with the technology that made mass communication possible. Recognition of that need is not just a current phenomenon. Fifty years ago Herbert Hoover saw the possibility of a lost potential in radio when he warned: "It is utterly inconceivable that we should allow so great a possibility for service to be drowned in advertising chatter."

Moholy-Nagy, a noted Hungarian artist, prophesied in 1932 "that the illiterates of the future will be ignorant of the use of camera and pen alike."

As early as November, 1935, W. W. Charters, Director of the Bureau of Educational Research at Ohio State University, said: "The high school can carry out no program of activity more valuable to students than that of developing a discriminatory and selective attitude toward the radio, the motion picture and the press."

Authors and critics such as John Silberman, Alvin Toffler and Nicholas Johnson, continue to remind us of the need to understand and to talk back to the media. Toffler, in particular, stresses the need to study the media as a way of, "Learning for Tomorrow."

"A new approach to the role of mass media in education will be made. Educative, behavior-influencing experiences, which children of twelve or under acquire through mass media have tended to be receptive and passive. To live effectively, children need a future-focused carefully guided implanted image of the power, subtlety, and limitations of radio, the press, and TV. Particularly TV. Youngsters need to understand (Walter Cronkite's tag line to the contrary that what they see and hear on TV often isn't 'The way it is'!

"Meticulously cultivated awareness of the bias inherent in mass media needs to become a part of teaching of and for the future.<sup>1</sup> Boys and girls need to understand that the same sensory input does not lead to an identical or common interpretation of this input by the central nervous system of any two listener-viewers. Our sub-culture membership, our past experiences, determine what we see and hear. Also, they need at an early age to recognize that TV in particular contains many 'visual editorials': not 'pure' news but the camera teams' and the editors' ideas of what will enhance their reputations, capture viewers' attention, and promote the personal value-beliefs of the network policy-makers.

"The three R's are not ignored in the context envisioned; they are learned under different ground rules, in more varied ways and at more varied times."<sup>2</sup>

Analyzing and criticizing the media does not mean that all is wrong with what comes to us via mass communication. Knowing it also includes being able to see the beauty and worth in a medium when it's there.

Eric Sevareid, the television sage, recently had some things to say about his medium that illustrate how myths develop about the media and how they affect us.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Children also are exposed to massive doses of carnage on TV. An American Academy of Pediatrics speaker says, "By age 14, a child has seen 18,000 human beings killed on television." Cf. "This World of English," English Journal (November 1972), p. 1248.

<sup>2</sup>Toffler, Alvin, Learning for Tomorrow (Random House, New York, 1974), p. 190.

<sup>3</sup>Sevareid, Eric, The Washington Post, 1976.

Myth: TV destroys conversation.

Fact - "It has stimulated billions of conversations that otherwise would not have occurred."

Myth: It's destroying the habit of reading.

Fact - "Book sales in this country since the advent of television have increased beyond the increase in population." Television is responsible for many millions of these sales.

Myth: TV is debasing the use of the English language.

Fact - "Until radio and then TV, tens of millions of people living in sharecropper cabins, in small villages on the plains and in the mountains, in the great city slums, had never heard good English diction in their lives. If anything this medium has improved the general level of diction."

Sevareid summarizes the source of many of these and other media myths: "Intellectuals of the type I am objecting to have always hated anything that the generality of people like. . . they must, to preserve their distinctiveness, their eliteness.

Even though there have been a number of organized attempts to promote the "teaching of media competency"<sup>1</sup> as a national priority, the isolated successes have been far from breathtaking.

The strength of the movement thus far remains with the individual schools and highly committed administrators and teachers who, by themselves, have constructed programs, fought to keep them intact and are still hanging-on through a stormy period of debate

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<sup>1</sup>Media Competency: "A basic skill which has to do with the ability to both recognize the impact upon the individual of the content, and the form of communication media and to learn to use these in order to respond with feeling, individuality, and constructive concern to basic problems and issues in society.

over what is important (basic) in curriculum and what is not (frivolous).

When that exciting combination of dedication, sense of relevance, and enthusiasm is discovered, the results need to be exposed to others who share the inclination or need the kinship.

ITEM

Roberto Clemente High School  
1147 North Western Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60622

Contact: Principal Maude Carson  
Instructor John West

Over 170 students per school year, with very diversified backgrounds, abilities, and interests are able to select areas of individual study which include media writing - directing, acting, and crew work. Opportunities are afforded students to create video, film, and radio programming.

Students produce a weekly radio series, a bilingual science videotape series, produce feature length sound and color film for all school assembly presentation, and cooperatively produce in-house video tapes for school use.

Graduating students thus far have been employed by:

WTTW/TV channel 11 (10 hired)  
WOPA (one hired)  
WGN-TV channel 9 (two hired)

Media production activities for the Clemente students have included a 9½ minute sound and color film based on scripting created by Clemente students. The film was shot on location in Mexico and Chicago.

Roberto Clemente High School will also be involved in co-production of a program to be aired as part of a series for WTTW,

a PBS channel in Chicago, and will be continuing their weekly radio programming over WBEZ/FM in Chicago. Radio programs have included the 'Steel Band', music department in concert, an original student produced radio drama, and an interview with Principal Maude Carson.

The problem in maintaining quality mass media studies of the kind found at Roberto Clemente High School and in extending its influence throughout the educational establishment can be focused in four basic areas. They are:

1. Definition of media study and a clarification of its objectives so as to provide a basis for evaluation and research.
2. Development of materials that are accessible, of high quality, and effective and organizable as a systematic approach within a set of acceptable objectives.
3. Development of pre and in service training of educators for new and on-going programs.
4. Priority attention to public and political recognition of the need for mass media study and a campaign program to "merchandise and sell" that need to the public and (above all) to the educational establishment.

All of these problems must be met with the development of national leadership before the media study movement can become the national movement it should be.

Nothing short of this will allow teachers and their students to get at the business of understanding the media, a Basic Survival Skill in Today's Society.

#### WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED 'MEDIA STUDY'?

Interestingly enough, the term "media" emerged from the world of marketing and advertising. In that context it has been used to designate vehicles of commercial communication

that can be classified, ranked and compared on a common basis in terms of total audience and advertising cost efficiency, with only secondary concern for their unique communicative properties.<sup>1</sup>

"Media" as a term in education poses some problems because it means different things to different people. Some of those "things" include audio/visual and instructional technology, books, newspapers, television, filmstrips, slides, photography, graphics, body language, comics, breakfast food containers, billboards, etc., etc. When the word "mass" precedes the term, it usually means something more precise, such as television, radio, film and the press. There is no absolute way of determining when "mass" can be used in describing a medium except that it refers generally to large groups involved in a one-way communication process.

There are some very precise definitions that help pin the term to the academic wall. One such definition is:

The exploration of the creation, the aesthetics, and the psychological, social, and environmental impact of the art forms of photography, cinematography, videography, radio, recordings, and tapes within the broad framework of general education in the humanities. I would call media studies the "new humanities" to distinguish them from the "old humanities" --- literature, drama, the fine arts, etc. -- from which they often borrow and with which they continually interact, mutually influencing each other.

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<sup>1</sup>Yu, Fredrick T.C., Mass Communication Research: Major Issues and Future Directions (Praeger Publishers, New York), edited by W. Phillip Davison, p. 145.

<sup>2</sup>Gerald O'Grady, "The Preparation of Teachers of Media," Journal of Aesthetic Education, Vol. 3, No. 3 (1969), pp. 116-7.



7

A more esoteric definition might be: a probe into the structure of models - the study of the environment of experiences. Since the probing of experience is experience, media study is beautifully redundant. It's an interface.

Definitions such as this fit into a Neil Postman type philosophy which says: "Intelligence will be defined in a new way and a student's ability to create an idea will be at least as important as his ability to classify and remember the ideas of others. Education will become a making rather than a matching or memorizing process."

A simple but useful definition is: the making of film, photographs, radio, television, and sound and the study of their form and content.

Present day mass media study can also include print forms such as newspapers and magazines, but the electronic media tend to receive the greater emphasis.

But the best way to define media study for oneself is to see it happening.

ITEM

Catalina High School  
3645 East Pima Street  
Tucson, Arizona 85716

Contact: Principal D. K. Henrickson  
Instructor Dr. Leo Hartke

Media study in a summer school setting. Thirty students representing all levels of high school enrolled and entitled to acquire a quarter, a semester, or a year's academic credit.

The program is operated around a series of individual, paired, or small group lab-like activities directed toward exploring the world of media.

An account of a typical day may best indicate the operation of the program. On entering the classroom, the students check the blackboard for any special instructions, e. g., a movie orientation to new activities, announcements, etc. If none, they then store purses, books, and other materials on shelves in the back of the room and get their manila folders from the instructor's desk. These folders include instructions for activities, student paper work, and a Student Daily Activity Sheet. This SDA sheet indicates what the students intended to do that day. It is filled in at the end of the previous day's class and placed on the instructor's desk at the beginning of the period the next day. This sheet not only helps the instructor keep abreast of the activities, but also serves as an attendance check.

After submitting the SDA sheet, the students then fill in the Class Daily Activity Sheet. The CDA sheet serves as a bulletin to all students on what equipment and other materials are being used that day, by whom, and where. It also serves as a reservation sheet.

At the end of the period, the students indicate on the CDA sheet what they had accomplished that day, give themselves a grade, fill in the intended activities for the next day, and place it in the folder. At the end of a week, the students write a weekly evaluation, make comments, and grade their work. The instructor collects the folders each day, evaluates and grades them, and writes any necessary comments. These folders serve as an excellent supplementary means of observance and communication.

The number and kind of activities going on during a typical day are as various as the number and kind of students in the

classroom: paper and pencil textbook work, library work, work with equipment, preparing projects, producing audio and visual messages, tests, presentation of productions, evaluations, etc.

The instructor is seldom at rest: interpreting instructions for one student, getting material for another, testing someone, making suggestions for a project, counseling another, evaluating a production, providing encouragement, maintaining order, watching the time, etc.

ITEM:

Western High School  
35th & R Streets N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20007

Contact: Principal Mrs. Antoinette Corprew  
Instructor Margaret Stevenson

Primarily in social studies classes, one class worked on a propaganda unit using the following materials from a course called Media Now: Truth and the Dragon, What Will You Be?, Propaganda Devices, The Box, Listening and Seeing Emotionally. This unit was followed by one on hardware and production so that students could produce their own non-print propaganda statements.

Another group of classes also worked with a hardware and production unit using modifications of the materials from these sections in the Media Now course. This unit was related to their work with the Harlem Renaissance; their end product was a non-print presentation about one facet of the Harlem Renaissance. Various English, Speech, and Art History teachers were involved in the unit productions.

ITEM

East Leyden High School  
3400 Rose Street  
Franklin Park, Illinois 60131

Contact: Principal Dr. George E. Shaffer  
Instructor Jane Gaines

Four programs are included in a comprehensive elective approach to media study at East Leyden High School.

The courses are among nearly fifty developed by the teachers which are voted on each year by students. The voting determines which courses will be offered at Leyden as electives. The four media offerings listed below have never had problems with enrollment.

Early Film Comedy - a short course in film history which follows the development from silent to sound pictures. Approaches to writing are introduced with the film treatment, scenario, and film script with and without dialogue. Taking their inspiration from the Marx Brothers who really did create the famous stateroom scene from Night at the Opera from pieces of dialogue on paper tacked arbitrarily to the ceiling, students work out their own scripts on the walls of their rooms at home.

Film Study - nine weeks of animation includes a comparison of the characters of Mickey Mouse and Bugs Bunny and the evolution from cartoon to computer animation. Students write, plan, and shoot their own animated cut-out film. The second nine weeks is a switch to realism through the documentary film. One project requires students to document an aspect of contemporary life on tape -- video or cassette or film. Their relatives, friends, bosses, and co-workers come into the classroom live.

Film Production - from conception through planning conferences, rough treatments, story boards, scripting, directing, setting up, shooting, film processing, editing and titling, demands are made to develop multiple skills. The final product--a completed film--is ideal feedback and reinforcement.

Film and Literature - a concentrated study of the film and literature of the Thirties. Resources include fiction such as The Grapes of Wrath, the John Ford film of the book, and Studs Terkel's Hard Times interviews on tape. Words and images are compared. The goal of the course is a multi-media slide-tape presentation of students' arrangement of the visual and aural documentation of the times drawn from their reading, viewing, and listening.

ITEM

John Hanson Middle School  
Waldorf, Maryland 20601

Contact: Principal J. Ronald Black  
Instructor Mary Ellen Hoy

In the fall semester students study the history of film and the impact of the film medium on their daily lives. The students complete a learning activity packet on film which includes everything from creating a visual dictionary to storyboarding some scenes from American Graffiti. In conjunction with this unit materials on persistence of vision, genre, seeing emotionally, storyboarding, and editing are used. In the spring, students make their own films using a learning activity packet on film production. The study of film culminates with the Maryland State Film Festival and the school's own John Hanson Academy Awards evening when student films are screened for parents and certificates are awarded.

## WHAT MAKES A GOOD MEDIA TEACHER

The most important factor of influence in any media study approach is the instructor. The course, no matter what its scope or limitations, lives or dies in direct proportion to the teacher's willingness to go that extra mile.

Obviously, a top notch media teacher must possess all the attributes of any good learning facilitator. Media education places a greater than average burden of responsibility on teachers because of the technological skills and knowledge needed. Mass media teachers are involved in the most dynamic and complex course in the curriculum. Media education enables the skillful teacher to cross artificial lines of background and training and bring young people and educators together. Media is a teacher and in the hands of a trained leader can cut across curriculum lines, send the students into the community and help prepare them for a future that is difficult to anticipate let alone be prepared for. The following role attributes are useful in evaluating teachers already involved in media study or in identifying potential candidates.

1. Sympathy and understanding. Outstanding among teachers' qualities praised by screen education students is the ability to understand and to sympathize with the students. Of almost equal importance, however, is an ability also to recognize and understand the goals and routines of the educational establishment, especially where these may seem to be in conflict with students' desires and interests. Teachers need to be able to cope with administrative difficulties, inside and outside the classroom.

2. Sense of Relevance. A broad sense of the process and relevance of media education: an ability to select and emphasize, from the wealth of information and experience which comes from any given media communication or expression, those aspects which most relate to the line of inquiry or that set of principles which, clarified, would

enable the students to make their own sense of the media experience, of whatever kind.

3. Self-Awareness and Personal Security. It is important that media practitioners be mature in the broadest possible way. An essential aspect of self-awareness on the part of a teacher, for example, concerns his/her motivations toward teaching as a profession. No one should be unaware of the deep reasons why he or she is, in fact, attracted to this particular task in life, regardless of subject area.

4. Acceptance of Responsibility. Responsibility is an issue which should be deeply considered in connection with the oft-heard claim that "media turns kids on." They may do so initially, but it is the teacher's acceptance of his adult responsibility which will make the turning-on permanent and constructive. There is a time when students, quite justifiably, look to teachers for authority (to be authoritative, of course, does not mean being authoritarian) rather than chumminess, for knowledge rather than stimulus, for learning rather than "fun". To miss the challenge of such moments courts disaster, not easily regained.

5. Flexibility of Approach and Attitude. The need for flexibility is not of course confined to the teacher of media, but is more likely to be demanded of him than in some traditional areas.

6. Knowledge and Skills. There is an overwhelming range of information about the media and the allied entertainment, information and advertising industries, their history, techniques, social effects, major personalities and organizations, which should inform the ideal course of media education. In our present state, unfortunately, only a modicum of this knowledge is possessed by the average teachers, and it is often his or her sense of inadequate knowledge in these areas which contributes to feelings of insecurity.

7. Enthusiasm. It has long been a prime tenet of media education that teachers who undertake it should have, not merely a respect for the media and their potentialities, but a positive ability to enjoy good examples of contemporary films and television, and to communicate that enjoyment.

8. Ability to Plan and to Organize. A most important attribute of every good teacher is, of course, the ability to undertake the most efficient organization of his, and her students' time, energies, and resources. The changing role of the teacher in media education demands

that he develop this ability to the highest degree, and he needs a very wide variety of internal reference, resource, and experience upon which to draw. Despite the astonishing technical advances which have taken place to make film, television, and other media directly accessible and manipulable, it remains true that, compared with the print medium which has been the staple of education for centuries, we are still at what might be called "an immediate post-Gutenberg stage" in terms of modern media, that is, a relatively primitive one. No amount of hopeful prophecy can gainsay the fact that, in the average school for quite some time to come, the novelty and unwieldiness of the modern media will constitute a negative factor. Unless teachers, at the earliest possible stage in their training, are given experience in practical planning and organization of the tools and artifacts of the media, it may be over-optimistic to expect a smooth integration of media education into the known and traditional school patterns.

The following recommendations and observations should serve as guidelines for the selection of media teachers. In addition to the above, most good media teachers are:

- a. mechanically inclined
- b. energetic
- c. on-the-spot decision makers
- d. curious
- e. creators and doers
- f. self-motivated
- g. willing to assume the role of innovator and iconoclast

Traditional curriculum areas to date that seem to produce the best media teachers are:

- dramatic arts
- journalism
- language arts



Suggested areas of study for media teacher preparation include:

- social psychology
- music - art - drama
- semantics
- audio visual production
- education philosophy
- data organization and presentation

Specific areas of study for media teacher preparation are:

- educational administration
- media production - all forms
- history of media
- media aesthetics and criticism
- curriculum planning and materials development
- journalism
- media evaluation, interpretation, genre, and presentation

THE STATE OF THE ART - WHAT RESEARCH TELLS US

THE RESEARCHER SIMPLY CANNOT GO ON WITH HIS TIMEWORN MEASURES

To evaluate a "seminal innovation" in education, John Goodlad warns: "The researcher simply cannot go on with his stable research--his conventional criteria, his timeworn measures-- and expect to contribute to the advancement of educational practice and science. By doing so he endangers both. What he must do is come to grips with the conventional underpinnings of the innovation, for if it is truly radical, it will have objectives the conventional instruments of evaluation simply are not designed to measure."<sup>1</sup>

Goodlad's warning seems to be borne out when it comes to evaluation and research activities in media study.

There is little substantive research data on the effectiveness of media study on students. In fact, with a couple of exceptions, no strong research designs have been included in media study projects at any level across the country.<sup>2</sup>

Not a paper in the field is presented, not a conference on media is held that does not beg for more research on the effects of the mass media on our citizenry (especially the youth). But very few, as yet, have asked for research on how, whether, or why an organized media study program helps students to better cope with the effects of the mass media. In fact too few of those

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<sup>1</sup>John Goodlad, author of Thought Innovation and Research in the Advancement of Education.

<sup>2</sup>Exceptions include "Educational Innovation and Evaluation" by Dr. Andres Steinmetz in Philadelphia and "Media Now" at the Southwest Iowa Learning Resources Center, Red Oak, Iowa.

concerned with "What the Media Is Doing to Us?" ever consider educating the audience. Everyone seems to want to control or change the source (some have learned it is a most formidable task) rather than educate the consumer.

#### AN EXCEPTION TO THE RULE

One notable exception to this rule was a recent conference, Television and Children Priorities for Research held at Reston, Virginia, November 5-7, 1975.<sup>1</sup> Besides establishing research priorities, the Conference reported several common concerns.

Among them were:

- Protecting young persons from unintended harm from viewing television violence and television advertising.
- Insuring that young persons derive the greatest possible benefits from television.
- Improving the dissemination and evaluation of scientific finding.
- Increasing the quality and the impact of research on television and the young.

But especially significant was the report of one workshop group within the Conference that assigned a high priority to research that would help develop and implement a public school program to teach children and adolescents about the mass media. The group decided "that literacy of young persons in regard to the mass media is the proper concern for educational institutions

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<sup>1</sup>Television and Children Priorities for Research Conference held at Reston, Virginia, Nov. 5-7, 1975, sponsored by the Ford Foundation, the John and Mary R. Markle Foundation, and the National Science Foundation.

analogous to their concern about language literacy." They also concluded that "there was a major role for research in developing and introducing mass media instruction into the curriculum, in training teachers to teach it well, and in evaluating its effectiveness."

Ron Sutton, assistant professor in the Department of Communication at The American University in Washington, D.C. and past president of the National Association of Media Educators, recently called for a high priority in the development of a research process to determine the effect of mass media study on the adolescent. Sutton has coupled his request for research with stated objectives that he deems vital in gathering valid research data.<sup>1</sup>

John Debes, Coordinator for Visual Learning at the Eastman Kodak Company, long affiliated with the visual literacy movement and founder of the only presently active national group of media related practitioners that are closely allied with the media study concept, has set high priorities for media study and visual literacy research from the beginning of his involvement.

The only research presently available that reports on the effects of mass media training in secondary schools was done in Iowa with the Media Now course of study in the mass media. The major objectives and research results are as follows:

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<sup>1</sup>Youth, Media and Education, a report prepared for the National Panel on High Schools and Adolescent Education, not in publication.

A. MEDIA NOW - MAJOR OBJECTIVES

- I. Objective: Students participating in Media Now will improve their knowledge of mass media terminology and techniques more (statistical significance of .05) than will a group of comparison students not participating in the program.
- II. Objective: Students participating in Media Now will demonstrate increased production abilities more than will a group of comparison students not participating in the program.
- III. Objective: Students participating in Media Now will decrease (statistical significance of .05) their susceptibility to persuasion of the mass media more than will a group of comparison students not participating in the program.
- IV. Objective: Students participating in Media Now will increase (.05 significance level) their positive attitudes toward media more than will a group of comparison students not participating in the program.

Six hundred twenty-three tasks are designed into the Media Now course, and are organized into a performance hierarchy of four levels. They are, in descending order, course objectives, module objectives, LAP objectives, and student involvements (or activities). Student involvements are presented in the student guide (SLAG), the LAPs, and a resource manual (SLAB):

B. EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

Objective 1: Media Now Achievement

No differences between experimental and control groups during pretest.

No change for the control group between pretest and posttest.

Experimental group made very significant gains between pretest and posttest.

Media Now course contributed to significant gains in achievement confirming first objective.

Objective 2: Media Production

Total productions was highly significant.

Significant difference between groups was observed.

Media Now students produced more acceptable non-print media than a comparison group of control students.

Objective 3: Susceptibility to Persuasion

There was a significant shift in the quality scores for the posttest experimental group from brief descriptions to interpreting the stimulus. Media Now course enabled experimental subjects to interpret persuasive messages with higher quality descriptions than a comparison of control students.

Objective 4: Attitudes Toward Media

Significant attitude changes were observed over the total scores for the posttest, experimental versus control comparisons, and the experimental group, pretest and posttest comparisons. Inspection of the means indicates that attitudes toward media increased (positively) for the experimental group, thereby supporting the fourth objective.

All test instruments for the research have been validated.

6. EDUCATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

The research shows that the Media Now course of study provides students the knowledge and skills required for informed media consumption and skilled media production.

The research also indicates that an individualized approach to learning is an effective method of presenting course material in the study of mass media.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For a full report on Media Now Research contact Dr. William Majure, Director of Research, Southwest Iowa Learning Resources Center, Red Oak, Iowa 51566.

Even though the research efforts for the Media Now program apply specifically to Media Now efforts, the findings are significant for media study in general in the following ways:

- Media education can produce effects in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor behaviors.
- Acquired knowledge, production performance, attitudes toward media, and reactions to media can be measured.
- MN results can serve as an informal comparison for other approaches/systems being studied, and studies can be structured to formalize that comparison.

There are numerous approaches to media study throughout the country. These approaches vary from units on advertising, and television violence to film study and analyzing the newspaper. Some schools direct most of their activity to producing 8 mm films or video tapes. Some include audio tape production in their work. A large number of schools involved in media study limit their approach to the viewing and analyzing of films. There are a few schools that operate a highly organized and inclusive media study program. The length of the programs vary from the six week unit to full semester and even full year programs. Some schools offer a number of media production "courses" that can be chosen as electives.

Seldom will one find a school with a program that includes a basic media study course which is required and elective courses that can be pursued by those wanting to specialize in this field for possible vocational opportunities.

Whatever the approach, no recent report seems to be available on the total number of media study offerings throughout the country nor does any report examine the depth of the study when it does exist. Where the courses do exist, unlimited opportunities are made available to students who want to express themselves in alternate modes of communication as well as the time tested writing, speaking, and traditional art related activities.

ITEM

Surrattsville Senior High School  
Piscataway Road  
Clinton, Maryland 20735

Contact: Principal Donald M. Buck  
Instructor Margaret Harris

Media Now is a part of semesterized mass media courses at Surrattsville Senior High School. It is used to help in individualizing segments of the course and allowing students to pursue their interests in depth. This approach has expanded the survey course into a popular and highly motivated part of the curriculum.

ITEM

Mount Ayr High School  
204 North Lincoln  
Mount Ayr, Iowa 50854

Contact: Principal Harold Summers  
Instructor Bill Hohlfield

From individual frames reproduced on paper, they look like bored high-school boys in some sort of exercise. With proper attention given on the screen to the fundamentals of filmic rhetoric, the magic takes over. They give us a short incident with a sharp bite, on the subject of battlefield hatred. It was a half-semester project by a team of junior and seniors, their first and last work together.



But their instructor, Mr. Bill Hohlfeld, feels his students are given basic survival skills in coping with powerful advertising claims and exaggerated political promises that will continue to confront his students after leaving his mass media class in a small town in southwest Iowa.

Programs such as these need to be given national attention and linked with a network of schools doing similar work throughout the country. One such network was established under a Title III grant awarded by the U. S. Office of Education on June 26, 1975. The Southwest Iowa Learning Resources Center in Red Oak, Iowa, has established a national network of fifty demonstration schools which are presently offering a media course as a part of their school's curriculum. These schools are acting as demonstration sites for potential adopters throughout the country.

#### Organization and Geographic Locations

Four regions were selected to facilitate the establishment of the fifty media study demonstration sites.

The four regions are East Coast, Far West, Middle West and West Central. Each of these areas is represented by a regional coordinator.<sup>1</sup>

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### Regional Coordinators

Regional coordinators have a background in a media related field, exceptional organizational ability, teacher training capability, and a strong background in media study development and research activities. Each coordinator is responsible for master teacher selection at their demonstration sites. They also coordinate activities within their region. The coordination includes actual media training activities and liaison between schools, State Facilitator groups and potential adopters. All Coordinators are responsible to the Media Dissemination Project Director at central headquarters in Red Oak, Iowa.

### Master Teachers

All media demonstration sites are staffed with trained and qualified media teachers. They have been carefully selected and many are veteran media study teachers.

Each master teacher has adopted a program called media to fit their school's philosophy, their individual style, and their students' needs. At the same time, because of its competency based design, the media course integrity is inherent in each approach.

All schools involved in the national Dissemination Program have agreed to the following:

- a) To release their media teachers two working days for the training seminars.
- b) To provide necessary facilities and equipment as required by the course of study.
- c) To accommodate the individualized approach as required by the course of study.

d) To accept and receive visitations from potential adopters.

Potential for Media Dissemination Network

Even though it's too early to evaluate fully the success of the network, early indications suggest that this approach meets the needs of both potential adopters and facilitators responsible for promoting educational change in their respective areas.

There has been close liaison between the network and state facilitators in each region.

The potential for research is inherent in the network. The media demonstration schools and each new adopter school represent varied racial, ethnic and social economic settings and a broad range of school sizes and philosophy.

The media family of adopters and demonstrators represents a ready made population for more valid research concerning the myriad of questions regarding the mass media and our culture.

In addition, the systematic nature of the media approach, its measurable objectives and common base lend a more stable and manageable vehicle to facilitate all phases of evaluation and research.

To further facilitate dissemination and adoption, a Coordinator of Media Study Training now works in the network. The Coordinator has three major responsibilities:

1. the planning-coordinating-and conducting of awareness seminars.

2. the planning-coordinating-and conducting of training sessions.

3. the coordinating and follow-up training and trouble shooting of adopters.

## CONCLUSION

Mass media study in the schools (the making of film, photographs, radio, television and sound, and the study of their form and content) is at a critical stage.

The need is established.

All high school graduates, whether they become lawyers, doctors, morticians, teachers or farmers, should learn about the strengths and the flaws of mass communications. They need to learn what it can do for them, and what it can do to them.

The courses offered to public school students should not only show them how to make media forms but also be concerned with how the structure of these forms create the reality and the unreality of our society.

The need for a national educational priority is not established.

Not all educators recognize the basic need for media study activities. The need for national leadership is critical. Once leadership is developed, media study must be defined and its objective clarified and only then can much needed media study research flourish.

High quality and cost effective materials that offer an organized and systematic approach must be developed.

Such materials should be part of a development of pre-service and in-service training for teachers.

All of this can be made part of a campaign program to "merchandise and sell" the media study need to the public at large.

High school principals throughout the United States are in a key position to enlist the largest medium (education) to help us "understand the media".

Teachers and students are ready to master this important survival skill.