

Making Media

Just as *literacy* is the ability to read and write, *media literacy* involves not only the ability to analyze and evaluate media messages, but also the ability to create media messages. Media making is an important part of media literacy and one that's sometimes overlooked.

Media making is not only empowering and great for hands-on learners, but also an exciting way to build on media literacy and media activism skills. Some of media literacy's basic analytical tools, like the language of persuasion, are perhaps best understood when we use them to create our own media messages. Further, by creating media, we become active participants in our media culture, adding our voices to a media landscape that often speaks for us. Mainstream media often perpetuate stereotypes, glamorize unhealthy lifestyles and behaviors, ignore important aspects of stories and marginalize or silence entire communities. Independent media makers (like you!) can tell stories from their own perspective, providing an alternative and challenging the perspectives commonly found in the dominant media system.

You can make media using inexpensive items such as used magazines, pencils, markers, scissors, and paper to make zines and counter-ads. Or you can use a video camera and a computer to create short documentaries or digital stories to share online or with your community. Independent media can be personal, such as a blog or photo exhibit, or it can include news content delivered via community radio, public access television, or online.

Listed below are summaries of media you can make and resources with examples. Keep in mind that many of these types of media can be made at a beginning, intermediate, or advanced level. For example, a media literacy game could be a bingo game that uses paper cards and introductory media literacy definitions as clues or it can be an elaborate media trivia board game.

Some types of media making may not be appropriate because of skill level, budget, lack of resources and time, disability, or negative experience with a particular type of media or subject matter. Keep this in mind when choosing which type of media is right for you, your classroom, audience, or community.

Art Projects

Art is a nearly universal mode of media making. Traditional art includes painting, printmaking, drawing, photography, sculpture, etc. Some art projects, such as photography and printmaking, require more specialized supplies and equipment. Other art projects include bookmaking, comics, murals, mosaic, and graffiti art. With just a pencil or pen and a piece of paper you can draw a comic strip or other image to convey your own media message.

Learning to Love You More

www.learningtoloveyoumore.com

Learning to Love You More is both a website and series of non-web presentations comprised of work made by the general public in response to assignments given by artists Miranda July and Harrell Fletcher. Assignments include many media-related activities that can be done by individuals, friends, and families.

Youth Outlook

www.youthoutlook.org/news

YO! trains young writers in skills required for interviewing, reporting, and fiction writing as well as photography, computers, and radio production. Their site includes news stories, poetry, comics, and a photo gallery - all created by youth.

Music

Music is another ancient form of media making that spans all human cultures. You can perform songs written by others or compose your own songs. Performed solo or in groups, there are countless styles and genres of music to choose from -- or invent your own! You can record your music on a tape recorder, MP3 recorder or computer, using a single built-in microphone or multiple professional mics. Share your music on CDs, MP3s, or podcasts.

Activity

Visit a local music store for instructional books, CDs, and DVDs that will help you learn how to play and compose music. There are thousands of websites offering lessons and instruction, as well as inexpensive audio recording software and equipment.

Zines

Zines are homegrown magazines, usually made into a small booklet that is copied, stapled, and distributed to family, friends, and community members. They're a cheap and fun way to get your message across. Zines can be made by one person or a group of people, and they can be created once or printed regularly, much like a local newspaper or magazine. The main tools you will need are paper and ideas. Zines can include collages, poems, drawings, stories, games, recipes, found objects that can be copied, basically anything you can put on paper. Independent bookstores and record stores often carry zines. You can also check out the links below for examples and more information.

The Book of Zines

www.zinebook.com

This site includes an introduction to zines, zine history, zine archive, and many other links.

Cultural Energy

www.culturalenergy.org/teenmedia.htm

Cultural Energy is a non-profit organization devoted to creating media voices for youth, the arts, and activism. The site allows you to listen to the show and view online zines and video segments.

John Labovitz's E-Zine-List

www.e-zine-list.com

A comprehensive list of independent and creative e-zines (online zines) with a search feature for titles and keywords.

Counter-ads

Take an ad and change it, creating a different message. Counter-ads can be made using magazines, newspapers, audio or video technology, etc. The easiest way to make a counter-ad is to use print media: change the text or image of a magazine or newspaper ad to create a more truthful and revealing statement. Counter magazines are also fun to make. Take an entire magazine and cut letters, words and images from one page and paste them on another. Using only what is contained in one magazine you can expose messages sent when we flip from one page to the next, illustrating how multiple media messages combine to impact our thoughts, decisions, behaviors, and emotions.

AdBusters

www.adbusters.org

AdBusters is a global network of artists, activists, writers, pranksters, students, educators, and entrepreneurs who want to “advance the new social activist movement of the information age.” Their site contains international news features, forums, information on current campaigns, and a culture jamming gallery.

Badvertising

www.badvertising.org

Countering the seduction of dishonest tobacco advertising by doctoring-up tobacco ads to make them honest.

New Mexico Media Literacy Project

www.nmmlp.org

NMMLP’s website includes information and resources on creating effective counter-ads.

Games

Creating your own media game is a great way to learn more about media and teach others. Examples of games include media quizzes, media bingo and media trivia. Games can be combined with art projects, such as bookmaking or zines. You can make the game as easy or difficult as you want. Media games can range from difficult media trivia to humorous quizzes.

Blogs

Blogs are web logs or web journals written by Internet users who want to connect with others. Bloggers journal their thoughts and ideas, and readers of the blog can respond by posting comments. Blogs are a great way to spread information and to see what people have to say about what you or others have written. More and more websites are including blogs as a way to communicate with online visitors. Blogs are also a great place to have discussions with people you wouldn't normally have contact with because they might be from another community, city, country, etc.

Blogger

www.blogger.com/start

You can learn blogging basics, including how to create your own blog in minutes on this site.

Mediacology Blog

www.mediacology.com

This blog explores the relationship between media literacy, ecology, art, and education.

Stay Free Magazine

www.stayfreemagazine.org

Stay Free! explores mass media and American culture. Stay Free runs a blog, curates the Illegal Art Exhibit, and offers media literacy curriculum for high school and college teachers.

Websites

Websites are a great way to share stories, exhibit your artwork, photos or videos, collaborate with others, and more. Websites consist of one page or many pages that include resources, stories, articles, media examples, blogs, podcasts, art, news, etc. Webpages, like any other media, must be designed for those you are trying to reach. Who is your message intended for? Will your audience gain more from podcasts, blogs, articles, images, or video? Knowing who your readers, listeners and/or viewers are will determine the type of website you create. Visit many websites and observe how their design, content, and function can vary.

AllAboutYourOwnWebsite.Com

www.allaboutyourownwebsite.com

This link includes a seven step guide to creating a website.

Tech Soup's Web Building Page

www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/webbuilding/index.cfm

This site offers dozens of articles on the tools and resources to build and host a website for nonprofit organizations.

Digital Stories

Digital stories can be one of the most powerful forms of media. They are commonly narrative, short video pieces that tell a story, created by an individual or group of people. These videos can be about you, your community or organization and they can be fictional, documentary, non-narrative, animated, short, long, simple, or complex. They are stories from your point of view. Your digital story will depend on your vision, your intended audience, and what you think your audience will connect and react to. Digital stories are sometimes easier to create than a short documentary because they are all about what you know, think and feel. Digital storytelling can be done with minimal equipment, such as a video camera with in-camera editing (stopping and starting the camera to change shots) and photographs or drawings to help illustrate your story. For more information on digital storytelling see the Media Justice guide on this DVD-ROM.

Center for Digital Storytelling

www.storycenter.org

The Center for Digital Storytelling is a non-profit training, project development, and research organization dedicated to assisting people in using digital media to tell meaningful stories from their lives.

Third World Majority

www.cultureisaweapon.org

Third World Majority is a media training and production resource center run by a collective of young women of color and their allies dedicated to developing new media practices that affect global justice and social change through grassroots political organizing.

Video and Filmmaking

Other kinds of videos and films include narrative (fictional) shorts, documentaries, animation, experimental works, counter-ads, and public service announcements (PSAs). You can make a video simply by editing in-camera (stopping and starting the camera to change shots) or in a more advanced way by using editing software on a computer. You can use a scanner to capture still images and an external microphone for better sound quality. Documentaries can be anywhere from five minutes to feature length, while counter-ad videos and PSAs are usually 30-60 seconds long. You can show your work to a wider audience by holding screenings at schools, community centers, workshops, or conferences. For a more intimate setting you can screen your work in a home or backyard using a projector and large white sheet or screen. Videos can be distributed on DVD, uploaded to a website, or shown on a public access cable TV channel. There are many possibilities for film and video in an ever-changing media landscape.

Cultural Energy

www.culturalenergy.org/teenmedia.htm

Cultural Energy is a non-profit organization devoted to creating media voices for youth, the arts, and activism. The site allows you to listen to the show, view online zines, and video segments.

Listen Up!

www.listenup.org

Empowering youth through media activism (including critical viewing and production) is the focus of this site. It includes more than 150 youth-produced pieces of media as well as pamphlets on how to create and distribute PSAs.

Media That Matters Film Fest

www.mediathatmattersfest.org

The Media That Matters Film Festival is the premiere showcase for short films on the most important topics of the day. Local and global, online and in communities around the world, Media That Matters engages diverse audiences and inspires them to take action.

Paper Tiger Television

www.papertiger.org

This site offers “ROAR,” the Paper Tiger TV guide to media activism, along with information on current projects, and a long list of alternative media resources.

Youth Channel

www.youthchannel.org

Youth Channel shows work by youth and for youth. You can watch the channel on their website and access youth media resources.

Podcasts

Podcasts are audio files that can be downloaded from websites and uploaded onto mp3 players, such as iPods and Zunes. Podcasts can contain music, news, speeches, radio shows, audio from conferences and other events, or even combinations of these things.

Podcast.net

www.podcast.net

A large podcast directory organized by general and specific topics.

Podcasting News

www.podcastingnews.com/articles/How-to-Podcast.html

This site includes many links and a step-by-step guide to making your first podcast.

Voices.com

www.voices.com/podcasting/how-to-create-a-podcast.htm

An introduction and tutorial for creating your own podcast.

Radio

Many cities and towns have noncommercial radio stations - owned by a school, university, government body, or nonprofit organization - where your voice can be heard. Some communities also have Low Power FM stations: small, community-based FM radio stations that broadcast within a short distance. If you've ever wanted to create and perform a radio drama with others, share a story on air, or edit audio, find out how to get involved with your public or Low Power FM radio station. Volunteering or working at your local radio station is a great way to learn radio technology, speak out, and become more involved in your community.

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Prometheus Radio Project

www.prometheusradio.org

Find out about ways to take action in order to free the airwaves, get information on the FCC, low-power radio, learn about their project, and get radio facts on this website.

Youth Radio

www.youthradio.org

Youth Radio's mission is to promote young people's intellectual, creative, and professional growth through training and access to media and to produce the highest quality original media for local and national outlets.

Youth Outlook

www.youthoutlook.org/news

YOI trains young writers in skills required for interviewing, reporting and fiction writing as well as photography, computers and radio production. Their site includes news stories, poetry, comics and a photo gallery all created by youth.

Public Radio Fan

www.publicradiofan.com

Schedule listings for thousands of public radio stations and programs around the world.

Public Radio Exchange

www.prx.org

A nonprofit service for distribution, peer review and licensing of radio pieces.

Public Access Television

Did you know that in many communities, you can learn how to make your own TV show, get access to cameras and other equipment and actually produce a TV show? And in most cases, you can do it all for free? Community cable access TV helps to democratize a television landscape dominated by Big Media. (Not surprisingly, it's under attack by Big Media and their allies.) Use the online directory below to find out if your community has an access center, then visit them for information on classes and workshops, volunteer opportunities and how to get your own show. Don't just watch TV, make it!

Websites of US PEG Access Channels

www.ourchannels.org/alpha.htm

Look up information on a public access station near you.

Alliance for Community Media

www.ourchannels.org

A nonprofit, national membership organization representing over 3,000 Public, Educational and Governmental (PEG) access organizations and community media centers throughout the country. ACM is committed to assuring everyone's access to electronic media through public education, a progressive legislative and regulatory agenda, coalition building and grassroots organizing.