



Barry's Bulletin

a popular culture digest for media educators

By Barry Duncan

Fall 2003

Welcome to the Fall edition of *Barry's Bulletin*. In this issue, Barry profiles three dynamic media educators: David Buckingham, the late Neil Postman and Carolyn Wilson. In addition, he shares his recent experiences in Korea and reviews the following resources: *Media Education: Literacy Learning, and Contemporary Culture*; *Visions/Revisions: Moving Forward with Media Education*; *Rethinking Schools' Bowling for Columbine Study Guide*; *Media Magazine*; and the film documentary *The Corporation*.

David Buckingham: A Formidable Achievement in Media Education



Writing about media education at both the theoretical and practical levels is a major challenge. Fortunately, while the number of publications is increasing, let's acknowledge that this is indeed a rarefied but important endeavour. However, the intellectual credibility and advancement of the media education movement depend on constantly reappraising our pedagogical practices. Among the small group of published media educators, one of the most influential and, I should add, prolific, is David Buckingham, Professor of Education and Director of the Centre for the Study of Children, Youth and Media at the University of London's Institute of Education. (The Institute of Education is the UK's leading graduate school of education.)

David Buckingham has edited or written over eight books, including *Watching Media Learning: Making Sense of Media Education*; *Reading Audiences: Young People and the Media*; *Children Talking Television: The Making of Television Literacy*; *Cultural Studies Goes to School: Reading and Teaching Popular Media*; *After the Death of Childhood: Growing up in the Age of Electronic Media*; *The Making of Citizens: Young People, Television News and the Limits of Politics*; and *Teaching Popular Culture: Beyond Radical Pedagogy*.

Starting with his first book in 1989, *Watching Media Learning*, I can testify to its powerful impact on media teachers who were compelled to re-examine their classroom practices – an exercise that is always a chastening experience. His most recent book, *Media Education: Literacy, Learning and Contemporary Culture*, is undoubtedly his most important. It brings together so many of his ideas and recent perspectives on theory and practice, takes the pulse of media education today and offers a road map for the future.

David's proudest achievement is his work as Director of the Centre for the Study of Children Youth and Media. One has merely to go to the Centre's Web site, at



www.ccsnline.org.uk/mediacentre/main.html, to see the wide range of research that has been undertaken in recent years. Some projects include:

- Pokemon in Five Cultures: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Children's Global Media Culture (1999-2001)
- Sex on Screen: Young People's Responses to Sexual Content on Television (2001-2002)
- Children In Communication About Migration (2001-2004)
- Textuality in Video Games: Interactivity, Narrative Space and Role Play (2001-2003)

I got to know David several years ago when he came to Canada for a week of workshops and presentations in Toronto and Saskatchewan. Now, in 2003, we were together again in Seoul Korea. While we never had a formal interview, throughout our week my host Hyeon-Seon Jeong and I had numerous discussions and debates. To begin, here are her observations about being a student under David Buckingham.

"David loves working with challenging students rather than ones who might respect him too much to have their own initiatives. My tutorials were full of energetic discussions to explore issues of media education, design my research, analyse raw data and apply new theories. I always felt that I had something new from 1-2 hours of tutorials with David as he is a good listener, but he's also a good questioner who can challenge your assumptions and practices to the very bottom. Yet in doing so, he always tried to make sure that I was in the 'driver's seat' in conducting my research and writing the thesis.

I also loved his uniquely British, nicely twisted sense of humour. And he was very keen on establishing a research community for his students and often suggested that I discuss my thesis problems with the other students."

A few observations of my own:

- There is an edge to David which could be mistaken for arrogance (he dismisses as "passé" pop culture phenomena such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*) but I think it is really just a mask. You soon realize that as a teacher, he has high standards and expects his students to do their best. And they do.
- In Seoul, as well as in Toronto, David looked for bargains of obscure recordings of jazz. At home he relaxes by playing the sax.
- The role of the audience in media education is critical in all his work, but he distrusts those who romanticize its role, making the notion of resistance a radical notion.
- While British education has made media studies a mandatory part of the curriculum, there is only a token amount of in-service training, which leaves many ill-prepared teachers struggling desperately to cope. David sees this as an intolerable situation.
- His greatest worry is that in spite of the many achievements of his Centre, the "bottom-line" thinking of his and other universities makes his specialized program vulnerable to cancellation or budget cutbacks.



Media Education Adventures in Seoul, South Korea



In late September I was privileged to spend a week in Seoul, primarily to participate in an international symposium on media education. I was sponsored by the Korean Association of Journalism and Communication studies. While I am very much aware of the differences between Asian countries, I must say their amazing hospitality to visitors is a unifying factor. As a travelling media educator I can only give rave reviews to my media education colleagues in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, and now Korea.

My guide throughout the week was Hyeon-Seon Jeong, who did graduate work in culture and media studies at the University of London and completed her doctoral dissertation on critical pedagogies under David Buckingham. She was a superb, resourceful host and looked after us well. David and I were the two English speaking visitors for the special panels and the international symposium on media education. Besides absorbing Korean culture, the three of us were together most of the week and had, in addition to the usual tourism, many opportunities to discuss the challenges of media education theory and practice.

There is great interest about media education in many Asian nations, including South Korea. (For example, a book on media literacy by journalist Akiko Sugaya, which was a best seller in Japan two years ago, has been translated into Korean.) There is also a strong admiration for the achievements of the Ontario-based AML. Ergo we are minor academic celebrities in Hong Kong, Japan and South Korea. (I was also delighted to receive comments from Korean teachers who were familiar with "Barry's Bulletin.")

The Korean education system is rigid and steeped in tradition, but spaces are opening up in the curriculum and this is where media education has much to offer. At the symposium we heard eight different presentations on topics such as "Media education in Japan," "Reorganizing Curriculum," "Journalism Education" and "Future Directions in Korean Media Education." David Buckingham presented on "Making Media Education Happen: A Global View." My topic was "The Role of the Association for Media Literacy in Canada."

At the practical level of media education in Seoul, I was impressed with a visit to the Haja Centre where, until recently, Hyeon-Seon had worked full-time. This is an inspiring creative arts centre. For many of the typical 15-year-old teens, it's a place they go to if they drop out of school. From digital animation to dance, this was a fascinating place to teach and to learn. The enthusiasm of staff and students was palpable.

I trust the symposium bodes well for progress in South Korean education. Recently, an alliance of media educators in Asian countries has been formed. As a result, we can look forward to modest developments which were not possible a few years ago. I will continue to inform readers of their progress.

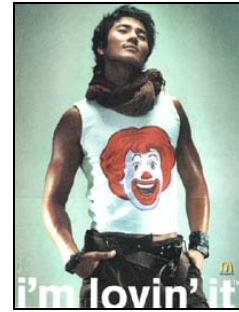


A few cultural snapshots:



The golden arches of McDonald's are everywhere. At a Starbucks, I heard Frank Sinatra songs followed by the comedy routine of some pathetic American stand- up comic. The Korean diners were ignoring this offensive sonic backdrop. A mild but annoying case of American cultural imperialism.

This poster, in front of every McDonald's, is very suggestive. The low angle shot gives the young man authority and power, yet the Ronald McDonald T-shirt makes him appear clownish – a genuine transnational. Is this the new multicultural Korean? Muscular with an ambiguous, taunting look? The script below – "I'm lovin' it" – means whatever you want it to mean. It reminds me of the similarly meaningless Coca Cola slogan, "Coke is it."



- The large downtown department stores seem more lavish and upscale than the best I have seen in Toronto. On the clothing floors, you can find not only all the typical big transnational companies (Dior, Chanel, Armani) but Korean and Japanese brands as well. There may be limited political democracy in Korea but consumer democracy goes on unabated.
- Everyone has a mobile phone. There are special deals and prizes specially targeted to young people. On the stairs to the subway, one phone company had three different billboards, each one targeted to the different interests of ages 12-16, 17-25 and 26-50.
- Downtown Seoul, especially the area close to the universities, is a crowded, neon sign-saturated high energy experience more animated – if you can believe it – than New York's Time's Square or Toronto's Yonge Street. Added bonus? You really feel safe and there's no evidence of rowdiness.



Driving close to the border of North Korea, we went to the Unification Observation Tower, a site for tourists and a very obvious instrument for state propaganda. (On display were some North Korean text books with their edicts on daily routines to be followed and the necessity to praise communist teachings.) Here one can see North Korea across a wide, well-guarded river. The North Koreans have built a model settlement there which has been nicknamed 'propaganda village.' I experienced a delicious capitalist frisson of danger when, through binoculars, we could see some 'live' North Koreans.



Neil Postman: The Passing of an Influential Communications Guru

We learned last summer at the AMLA media conference in Baltimore that Neil Postman was critically ill. He died on October 12. As one of the most influential writers on modern communication and himself a powerful communicator, he will be missed. I heard him speak several times at conferences in Ontario. Each time he received a standing ovation. In 1984 I interviewed him for *Forum Magazine* (the publication for Ontario Secondary Teachers). At the Harvard Media Education institute in 1995, I chatted with him once again. He was friendly, open and always seemed interested in your opinion.



Neil Postman popularized the study of media, especially television, and brought the general public and many teachers into the fold – some of whom became devout followers and others who eventually found his seductive diatribes a liability. (In the early 1970s, if you were a young, innovative and dissenting teacher, you could easily provoke people by quoting unorthodoxies from Postman's *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*.) It was always invigorating to talk to teachers after a Postman presentation and hear passionately delivered arguments both pro and con his perspectives. However, as a media literacy evangelist, I was always distressed that English teachers – who were his biggest fans and already dismissive of popular culture – seemed deliriously delighted in having found a saviour figure. They would then return smugly to doing traditional English with even greater fervour. Alas.

His case to demonstrate the deficits of the mass media was best conveyed in the books *Amusing Ourselves to Death* and later *Technopoly*. For media educators, there is a division of opinion about his analysis of the media and his recommendations for critique.

My concern centered on his reluctance to grasp the fundamentals of audience theory (whereby people are not seen as empty vessels receiving information uncritically, but are capable of resisting or negotiating the meaning of media messages). The charge that he was a techno-determinist depends on what works you summon for your argument. I was mystified that only late in his career did he acknowledge the inspiration of Marshall McLuhan. And while he wanted us all to be 'media ecologists,' (a fetching term Postman had coined) he asserted that media technology should be taken out of the classroom, which could only be served by the medium of print.

Regrettably, in spite of presenting his case to innumerable groups of teachers, he never made a comprehensive case for educators to develop a media literacy curriculum.

Whenever a new book came out, Postman made the round of interviews and talk shows. In Canada, thanks to the CBC, he was given ample time to present his latest diatribe (all variations on a theme). To our intellectual misfortune, however, few interviewers were prepared to offer major challenges to his dominant thesis. (There was, of course, the famous and scintillating *Harper's Magazine* debate between Postman and rightwing culture maven Camille Paglia. Here was invective and scholarship at its best!)

On balance, Neil Postman's contribution to the public discourse is considerable, and for that we can be grateful. Let's acknowledge that today we are in short supply of public intellectuals. How many people can you name who make big ideas important to a wide audience, as Postman did so eloquently, who provoke us into reassessing our ideas on culture and mass media? I rest my case.



Carolyn Wilson: A Media Educator Who Makes a Difference



In highlighting my colleague Carolyn Wilson, President of AML, I run the risk of being accused of obvious favouritism. But Carolyn has brought such lustre to the office, has represented us so well in events locally and around the world, and has so much to offer that I think you will agree that she deserves an in-depth interview.

Carolyn's charismatic, extroverted presence lights up a room. I have watched her interact effortlessly at conferences and social events. Living in Stratford, Ontario, a 90-minute drive from Toronto, means a lot of car travel to attend meetings. But she is indefatigable, driven, I believe, to make a difference in education, motivated by a passion for social justice and creating alternative solutions for a troubled world.

B.D. Tell us about one or more of your recent media pleasures – just so we can get the media flavour of Carolyn Wilson.

C.W. A recent “media pleasure” was going to the 9:30 screening of *The Corporation* with Barry Duncan during the Toronto International Film Festival. We stayed in the theatre until 1:30 a.m., listening to the director talk passionately about his experience during the Q and A after the film. It's a compelling documentary – a real must-see. (See Barry's review below.)

Another one was attending the Festival Schmooze at CHUMCity during the Toronto festival. It's always a great party and it's always interesting to see how CityTV covers the event. I love the way they “expose the process” when they're creating television.

B.D. Describe a teachable “media moment” you took advantage of in the last year.

C.W. One of the most significant was looking at the media coverage of the war on Iraq and exploring Chomsky's notion of manufacturing consent in the news media. Students spent time analysing and comparing the content of mainstream versus alternative media, and we had many discussions about how various media outlets constructed the war and the impact of these constructions on audiences. It was also inspiring to see my students create a video about their experiences at the protest at the School of the Americas [more on that later].



One of my students turned her footage into a mini-documentary, part of which was used on the local evening news. We had a lot to talk about that – what the student was able to capture on video, how the demonstration was then represented in her documentary and what the news station chose to use from her footage. There was lots of great material to discuss as we looked at the different media “filters” for this event.

B.D. How did you get started in media literacy?

C.W. I was always interested in media literacy as an essential component of literacy. I always believed that it was just as important to be literate about screen-based and electronic media as it was to be literate about print. Around 1990, my principal was aware of my interest in this area, and knew that I was teaching media literacy in my English classes. He offered me the opportunity



to teach Media Literacy when it was offered as a 5th English, which was great. I then was given permission to attend the first Guelph conference in 1990, and I never looked back! That conference was an incredible experience for me, and was really transformative, personally and professionally. As a young teacher, it was an amazing experience to be surrounded by so many gifted, talented educators, who were very open and willing to share incredible ideas and resources. I remember meeting for the first time people like Len Masterman, Robyn Quin, Barrie McMahon, our own John Pungente and you, Barry! I'll never forget the words spoken by Rick Shepherd, the conference chair, when he opened the conference: "None of you can possibly know how excited I am." I thought to myself: "I can!" I knew I was part of something that was groundbreaking and I was thrilled to be there. Then came the conference in 1992, and Media Part 1, 2 and Specialist (Thanks, Barry), and a Masters degree in Critical Pedagogy and Cultural Studies. I continued to meet some really gifted educators. I learned a great deal from them and they have continued to influence my work.

B.D. I have always felt that two of your most important influences are 1) you are a Roman Catholic and 2) you were brought up in a small town. Could you comment on these two areas?

C.W. Both these factors have had a great deal of influence on me personally and professionally. In terms of Catholicism, the social teachings of the Church have probably had the greatest impact. Modern Catholic social teaching is the body of social principles and moral teaching that is articulated in official documents and which deals with the economic, political and social order. Catholic social teaching includes a commitment to: safeguarding the rights of all people; maintaining solidarity with and preference for the poor; economic justice that prioritizes workers' rights; a belief in our role as stewards and trustees of the environment (rather than consumers and users); promotion of peace and disarmament; and the promotion of global solidarity and development, with the recognition that our responsibilities to each other cross national, racial, economic and ideological differences.

These teachings underpin everything I do in the classroom with my students. I think these teachings are central to our struggle for peace and justice on both a local and global level.



There is something to be said for growing up in a small town, and working for a small rural board in a place like Stratford. A sense of community is really important to me – and life in a small town was all about that. Everyone knew everybody else. Everyone's door was always open. I think this sense of community has shaped the way I look at a school and my classroom. I see these places as communities, where staff and students support one another and look out for one another. It's a place where we witness both the suffering and the hopes of our lives, and where we share in education as a journey. I also believe in experiential education and bringing the classroom into the world as part of that journey. I think it's

important to use places beyond the school as sites of learning for our students whenever possible. I see the physical space of the classroom as a kind of home base where we check in and reflect on our learning and dialogue about what is happening as a result of our experiences both within and beyond the classroom.

The advantage of working for a small rural board is found in this sense of community. It is possible to have a personal relationship with the director, the superintendents and the trustees. They know who you are, they know your work and what's important to you. The director with my board knows the kind of work I am interested in doing and the kinds of experiences I want to provide for my students. I have never been denied anything, which I think is really incredible. I



have never been refused permission for any kind of educational experience – ever – from taking students to live with families in a third world country, to participating in a memorial service and protest at the School of the Americas. I've worked with some great administrators, that's for sure. Of course, they also believe in the social teachings of the church, and they understand that that is what my work is all about, so they're very supportive of it.

And... Stratford is a really special place. Because of the theatre, there is a unique and diverse artistic community here that makes the town feel very cosmopolitan in some ways. I have a lot of friends in the theatre, and the arts have always been an important part of my life. There are great resources when you're teaching in a theatre town – amazing speakers and presenters who will talk about their work and their stories and provide a window or commentary on our society, our culture, and our history.

B.D. Media and Global Studies is one of your areas of specialization and we co-authored a guide for *Telemidium* which was well received. If you had to convince media teachers about studying this area, how would you go about it?

C.W. Well, as I said before, I see the classroom as a community of learners and it is a community that is connected to the world, not separate from it. I see my work in media studies as a kind of gateway to understanding a number of issues central to our lives as global citizens today. In media literacy education, I think it is important to examine media texts *and* their contexts in order for media literacy to remain relevant and lead us to some greater understanding of the media and the roles they play in our lives. It's important to look at what stories we're receiving today, why they're being created and how we're responding to them – whether we're talking about what we see on CNN or "Survivor."

For me, media literacy involves analysing media texts for representations of local and global events and issues and the ways in which these representations help to shape the meanings we assign to them. It involves understanding the ways in which ideology and values can be constructed and defined in the media, and asking questions about who benefits from this construction. It also involves examining the ownership and control of media and technology, and asking questions about the impact of current policies and practices on access, choice and range of expression. It includes an examination of the Western media for the way relationships between the North and the South are defined, and for the positions of dominance and oppression that may be reinforced through them.

Global education, within the context of media education, emphasizes a holistic approach to learning, one which recognizes the interconnectedness of life and the importance of global perspectives. "Holism seeks to expand the way we look at ourselves and our relationship to the world." (Global Alliance for Transforming Education, 1991) In order to achieve this, my experience suggests that the most relevant media education constructs a global vision, crosses borders, fosters a critical imagination, and offers a pedagogy of hope. Anything less is inadequate in addressing the challenges of our global community and our understanding of ourselves and our place in it.



B.D. Central to your approach to global studies is the practical experiential learning you provide through annual trips with students to the Dominican Republic for live-with-a-family week. What makes this experience so worthwhile?



C.W. Many people talk about the importance of bringing the world into the classroom. As I said earlier, I believe in bringing the classroom into the world. The key to this experience – the powerful part of it – is the fact that we step away from familiar surroundings, away from North American culture and live with Dominican families. We spend a week with these families in their homes in the town of Consuelo. During that week, the issues that we have looked at in the classroom – issues like global trade and free trade zones and hunger – suddenly have a human face. And the reality of the experience is something we cannot ignore. As one student said, “It’s not like the commercials or programs on television – I can’t turn this off.” It’s very powerful for the students to be able to learn first hand about the reality of a situation and compare that to the typical media representation of that issue or event at home. It’s also an opportunity for them to begin to question what the commercial media says connects us as global citizens. They quickly begin realize it has more to do with our humanity than with a particular brand of running shoe or fast food.

I believe that an experience like the week in the D.R. can help people develop a personal response to social teaching and social action. The trip experience has proven that students exposed to the realities of life in a developing country are motivated, upon their return, to address justice issues in their own community and beyond. The commitment of these students is really inspiring.



Because we live in a consumer society and many of us are in positions of material privilege and power here, it is difficult to shake the notion that we are the only ones capable of giving, and that those with less in a material sense are the only ones who need to receive. For me, this is what we must continue to work on, and what I believe is part of a transformative pedagogy for the “privileged” – learning to give generously of our spirit and our resources, and being open to receiving graciously the lessons we need to learn – lessons about our own lives, our relationships with others, our consumer culture, our treatment of the environment. We need to work on accepting these lessons and to realise that just because we

live in Canada, in the so-called “first” world, we don’t have all of the answers. We have a lot of learning to do, especially from our neighbours in the developing world.

B.D. You and several staff and students have also gone to the demonstration at the School of the Americas in Columbus Georgia, a school that trains Latin American soldiers in counter-insurgency techniques. There you’ve joined others including Martin Sheen in the vigil and acts of non-violent civil disobedience.

C.W. The SOA demonstration is held every November as part of an ongoing campaign to close the School of the Americas – a school with a violent and bloody history. In its 54 year history, the SOA (recently re-named the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation) has trained over 60,000 Latin American soldiers. In 1996, the Pentagon revealed the existence of training manuals “that advocated torture, execution and blackmail, and targeted civilians for these tactics” (www.soaw.org). Hundreds of thousands of Latin Americans have been tortured, raped, assassinated, “disappeared,” massacred, and forced to live as refugees by those trained at the School of the Americas.

In light of the School of the America’s bloody history, the non-violent demonstration to close the school is very beautiful and moving. Founded by Father Roy Bourgeois in 1990, the demonstration began with ten people, and this year there were over 10,000 in attendance. The School of the Americas Watch, an independent organization also founded in 1990, organizes the demonstration, as well as vigils, non-violent protests and media and legislative work aimed at closing the school. The actions of Father Bourgeois, the SOA Watch group and the



demonstrators are being noticed and gaining support: in 2000, the House of Representatives defeated a bi-partisan amendment to close the school by only ten votes.

The size and history of the demonstration make the students think about some interesting issues related to the news media, because there is very little written about the SOA (or WHISC) and the demonstration rarely makes the news. It was interesting to look at the SOA demonstrations along with the anti-war demonstrations that took place in the spring, before the U.S. attacked Iraq. Students began to ask questions about what stories are making the mainstream news, and why. Whose voices are being heard and whose are left out? Who benefits if certain voices are silenced? Who loses? They wondered why we were hearing so little – compared with the calls for war coming out of the White House – about calls for peace, about alternatives to Bush's military plans. It's a great opportunity to look at the alternative media, for the stories and voices that are given time and space there, and the way that mainstream and alternative media are organized and financed.

B.D. So how would you answer critics who might accuse you of propagandizing young minds.

C.W. Well, accusations of propaganda would be relevant only if what I was teaching about was false, and no one can say that. No one can dispute the track record of the SOA for example, or the living conditions of the sugar cane cutters on the batteys in the D.R. There's no secret here. This is factual. The evidence speaks for itself.

B.D. You have been president of the Association for Media Literacy now for four years. What is the importance of groups like AML to catalyze and sustain media literacy?

C.W. I think the AML is an amazing organization. I have travelled quite a bit over the last ten years or so, and my experiences have reinforced my belief that the organization is really something special. There is incredible expertise, commitment and dedication on the part of the AML executive, and everything that is done is done on a voluntary basis. It's amazing. The founders of the AML should be really proud of its history and accomplishments – and we're approaching our 25th anniversary! The organization has gained an international reputation that I believe is unparalleled. (And I'm not saying this because I'm the president – the people involved in the AML over the past 25 years deserve the credit here.) As Australia's Barry McMahon once said "If the AML builds it, they will come". He was referring to the international popularity of the conferences organized and hosted by the AML. I think he's right. From the first Guelph conference in 1990 to Summit 2000, thousands of educators have come together to exchange stories, strategies, and become inspired. We have created authentic opportunities for professional growth in media literacy for teachers from around the world, and I think we can be proud of that.

In Ontario, we have been successful in ensuring that media literacy is a mandated part of the curriculum at the elementary and secondary levels, despite the efforts of a neo-conservative government; we have developed resource guides and curriculum documents for Media Studies at the secondary level; we continue to provide opportunities for teacher in-service and media literacy events that are open to the public. I could go on and on. My point in recalling a little history is to emphasize the fact that we need to celebrate our accomplishments. It's easy sometimes to get beaten down by steps that various governments or administrators take that send us backward, not forward, but we have to remember all that we've done and what we're capable of doing. The great thing about media literacy education is that by its very nature it's progressive, it's relevant, it's connected to students' lives and they love it. At the end of the day, that's what really counts.



Conference Update

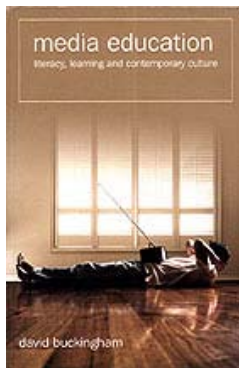
AMLA Media Education Conference "Literacy & Liberty: Rights, Roles & Responsibilities in a Media Age"

Last June's Baltimore conference was a great success thanks to the conference chair David Considine and his able committee. The conference represented a major step forward in the maturing of a fragile movement building across the United States. For at least half of the participants, this was their first national media education conference, providing the opportunity to discover like-minded people who want to explore media studies with their students.

The significant inclusion of international presenters such as Len Masterman from the UK, Geoff Leland from New Zealand and Barrie McMahon from Western Australia provided fresh perspectives.

Next conference: San Francisco in 2005.

Recommended Resources



Media Education: Literacy, Learning, and Contemporary Culture

David Buckingham

Polity Press, 2003 (UK), Blackwell Publishing (US).

Canadian buyers can order this from Theatre Books in Toronto (416)-922-7175.

It would not be an exaggeration to assert that this is the most important book on the theory and practice of media education in the last 10 years. Based on Buckingham's 25 years in the field, it brings together his insights on all the major aspects of ME, from media theory to caveats on doing digital media. Don't look here for lesson plans. This is not a "how to" book. There are plenty of such classroom resources elsewhere. What we need, and what Buckingham delivers, is serious reflection on our practices, our use of theory, our connections with student learning and our ways of using ME to enhance the subject curriculum. I would strongly recommend that media educators use this book as a spring board for think tanks in media education communities throughout North America and beyond.

It seems that ME has been nothing but a series of extended debates. Are we protectionists? Are we production-oriented? Do we advocate discriminating responses to elitist media? Buckingham reviews the various positions and offers his own perspective. Having written or edited over eight books, he can cite plenty of data and anecdotes. In many cases, he has done important, original classroom research to backup his observations. He has also spent enough time in North America to be aware of both Canadian and American viewpoints which resemble practices in the UK. In his latest book:

- Part One addresses the rationales for media education.
- Part Two explores the development of the field.
- Part Three addresses media learning.
- Part Four offers new directions.

Buckingham covers a great deal of territory succinctly and authoritatively. His writing is very accessible and he quickly provides us with necessary background on a controversy, offering advice in a direct and often provocative way. Here are two examples.



"Where Postman wants to return to a situation where children know their place, Tapscott argues that adults should try to 'catch up' with their children."

"We can no longer assume that our students will be sharing similar experiences with each other, let alone that they might do so with us. And we can no longer trust in a simplistic account of 'identity politics,' in which media images are seen to have singular and predictable consequences in terms of our students' perceptions of their place in the world."

Buckingham sees serious limitations in inoculative, protectionist approaches (i.e. where the media give us evil and misinformed representations) and in the 'demystification approach' whereby teachers will help students see through ideological constructs in the media. He is suspicious of the manifestos of the critical pedagogy movement as espoused by academics such as Henry Giroux. Why? Because they appear to be based on rhetoric and ignore practical realities of the classroom. Buckingham wants us to examine our pedagogies so students can move beyond the expected, *teacherly* answers.

What he does like, however, is student-centred learning in which teachers begin by finding out what young people already know about the media. He believes strongly in practice – especially with new digital media which facilitate complex image manipulation. He gives examples of student parodies of media texts and provides us with interesting accounts of their problematic reception. Above all, he wants media studies to have conceptual coherence and high quality. With so many untrained media teachers, this goal is of paramount importance.

Obviously, in a 200 page book, Buckingham doesn't have time to deal in an in-depth manner with all the current debates, but he has deliberated on the most important. That he has tried to avoid settling scores with his fellow UK academics (the temptation would be strong!) is especially admirable.

I know this book will travel well. I would love to have your feedback.

Visions/Revisions: Moving Forward with Media Education. *Telemedium*. National Telemedia Council, 1922 University Ave., Madison WI 53726 (608) 218-1183. Cost \$30.00.



As co-editor with Kathleen Tyner of this anthology, it is hardly fitting that I provide a detailed, critical review. This publication is international in scope and brings to the table many of the important media educators around the world – from Barrie McMahon to David Considine. While not all of the writers provide a road map of the future, there is enough good material to make this anthology one of the most important in recent years. Given the variety of media pedagogies, the co-editors made it clear that they were not necessarily in agreement with all the arguments and judgements presented. Many of the writers alluded to 9/11 and the war in Iraq for these events have proven to be major sites of struggle for all educators. Sections include: "New Media and Digital Culture," "Testing the Limits of Democracy," "Educational Theory and Practice" and "Media Education Around the World."



Study Guide to "Bowling for Columbine"

"Rethinking Schools," one of the few radical education periodicals in circulation, has much to offer media educators, especially social studies teachers and anyone interested in social justice and global studies. The most recent issue has an elaborate study guide to the award-winning documentary *Bowling for Columbine*. Over 12 study sheets include topics such as curricular connections, research and essay topics, using creative drama, creating cartoons, and using the film in a unit on tolerance. Check out their archives online at:



www.bowlingforcolumbine.com/library/teachers/index.php

"Popular Culture and Education." This special issue of the *Harvard Educational Review* (ISSN 0017-8055) can be ordered online from the Web page. (\$30.00)

<http://gseweb.harvard.edu/hepg/popculture.htm>

Articles include "Merchants of Death: Media Violence and American Empire," by David Trend; "Welcome to the Jam: Popular Culture, School Literacy and the Making of Childhoods," by Anne Dyson; and "Media Education and the End of the Critical Consumer," by David Buckingham.



Media Magazine (Issue 5, September 2003)

My colleague Chris Worsnop calls this quarterly magazine "The best media education publication available to teachers." To make his case, Chris cites the articles in the current edition "Why Should We Study Digital Games?," "The War in Iraq," and "Why I love Buffy." The print publication costs £30, but a black and white PDF version can be downloaded for free from the English and Media Web site.

Check it out at www.englishandmedia.co.uk/

Documentary Films are Gaining Popularity: A Sneak Preview of *The Corporation*

Big Pictures Media Corporation, 2676 Eton Street, Vancouver BC V5K 1K1 (604) 253- 8333 www.bigpix@thecorporation.tv

Thanks in part to the incredible success of films like Michael Moore's *Bowling for Columbine*, important documentaries are gaining a wide audience. In 2004, watch for a screening in your area of *The Corporation*, a three-hour documentary on the nature and power of corporations today. I was fortunate to see the world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival last September, where it was the runner-up for "The People's Choice Award." It has since won over four awards, including The National Film Board's award as the best documentary for 2003. Directed by Marc Achbar, one-half of the team that put together the successful film on Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*, *The Corporation* should gain an equally wide audience.



That viewers were not restless during such a long film is a tribute to the ideas and style it offers. Brilliantly edited by Jennifer Abbott, its well-articulated thesis about the role of corporate power today is supported by the opinions of intellectuals such as Noam Chomsky, Michael Moore, Maude Barlow, Naomi Klein and dozens of disillusioned, former corporate CEOs. (My favourite scene involved two Fox news reporters whose exposé of Monsanto's use of chemical additives in milk was suppressed.) Media educators will want to show and discuss the film as part of in-service training sessions and use sections with senior students. After rights and distribution arrangements are resolved, we hope that it will be readily available in 2004. In the meantime, there will be telecasts on TVOntario in February and Vision TV in March. When we spoke to director Marc Achbar, he was keen to involve media educators in classroom applications. I will keep everyone posted.

Media Awareness Network Wins Educational Internet Site of the Year Award



The Media Awareness Network (MNet) has been awarded the prestigious NAWEB 2003 Educational Internet Site of the Year award. Hosting Canada's largest media education Web site, MNet was granted this award in recognition of its "innovative, creative and practical" use of the Internet to provide resources for media education and Web literacy.

Visit MNet at www.media-awareness.ca

Barry Duncan is an award-winning teacher, author, consultant and founder and past president of the Ontario-based Association for Media Literacy. Co-author of the best selling text book, *Mass Media and Popular Culture*, he has presented workshops and keynote addresses to thousands of teachers in Canada and around the world. You can contact Barry at baduncan@interlog.com.

