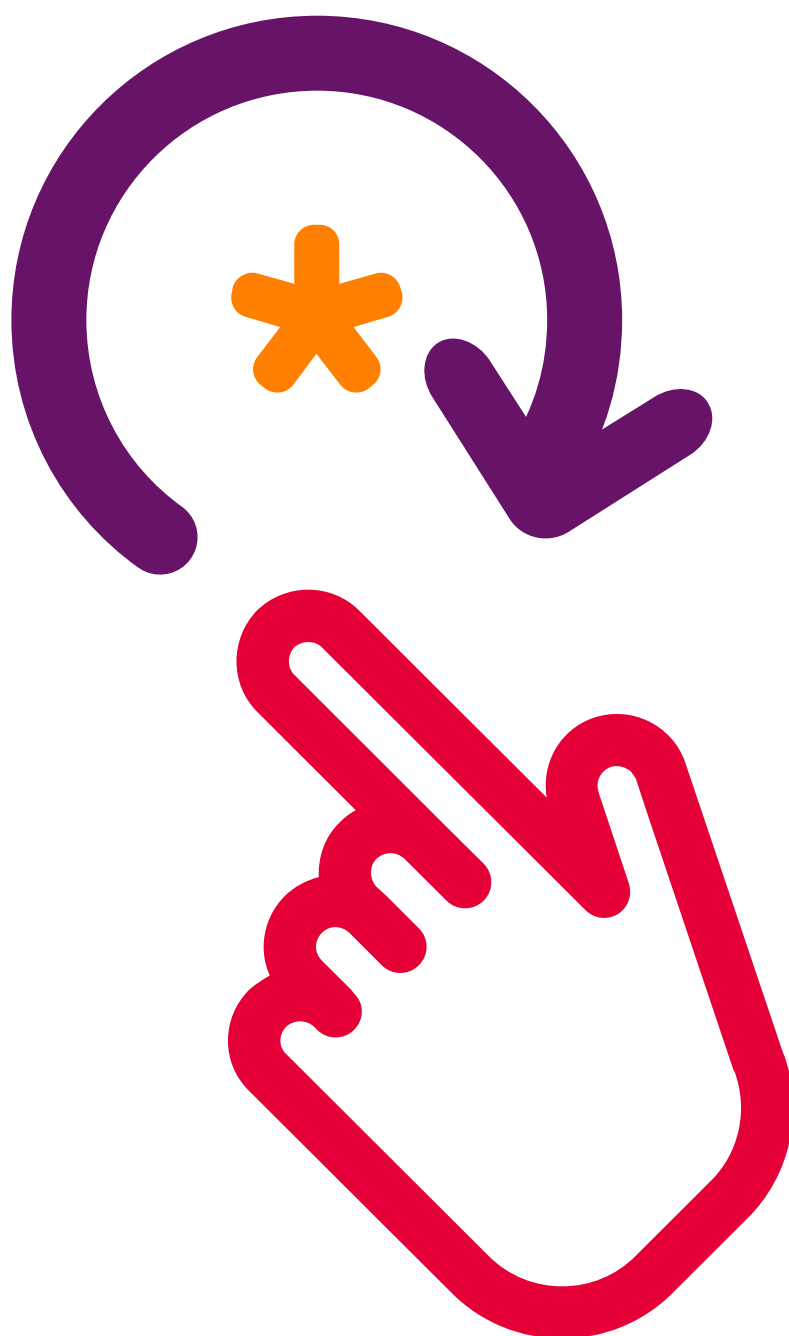


Ofcom Media Literacy Bulletin

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Welcome to the bulletin

Welcome to the fifth edition of Ofcom's media literacy bulletin.

Media literacy has risen up the political agenda in recent months, with the UK Parliament and European Commission taking an interest and we have news of both. We also report on other recent developments – including a new proposed media literacy role for the BBC as set out in the White Paper “A public service for all: the BBC in the digital age”.

This month saw the publication of a major media literacy initiative - Ofcom's media literacy audit; we have the headline findings from this research and details of our imminent supplementary reports. We've also asked Carry Bazalgette, Head of Education at the British Film Institute (bfi) to give an overview on the bfi's approach to media literacy.

For more information on the bulletin, including how you can contribute, please see page 11 and please note that some of the items in this bulletin have been produced for us by stakeholders; whilst we want to keep you aware of relevant developments, the views or opinions are those of the authors and should not be attributed to Ofcom.

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News

Media literacy in Parliament

On 11 January Danny Alexander MP tabled an early day motion in the House of Commons on media literacy skills. The text of the motion (EDM 1351) is shown below:

“That this House welcomes the work of the Media Literacy Task Force and the launch of the Charter for Media Literacy; commends Ofcom for its work towards its statutory duty to promote media literacy; highlights the cultural and economic benefits of improving media literacy as people adapt to new media technologies that present particular challenges to effective regulation; believes that media literacy skills benefit both children and adult learners by supporting a competitive knowledge economy with genuine choice, enabling democratic participation and active citizenship, and providing greater opportunities for lifelong learning, cultural expression and personal fulfilment; further believes that all school children should have opportunities to develop media literacy skills across the curriculum; and calls on the Government to endorse the Charter for Media Literacy and develop policies in support of the Charter's aims.”

The motion has been signed by 48 MPs (see <http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=29738&SESSION=875> for a list of signatories). Information on the Charter for Media Literacy is available at www.bfi.org.uk/education/research/advocacy/charter/.

European Safer Internet Day

February 7th was European Safer Internet Day. In the UK it was marked with an Ofcom supported conference at The Museum of London. Speakers at the conference come from a wide range of different organisations, including Vodafone, AOL, the Home Office and the BBC. The main areas the conference focused on included:

- Considering the media's role in providing balanced and sensitive reporting, particularly when dealing with challenging issues, e.g., pro-anorexia, suicide and self harm online forums.
- Examining patterns of behaviour as communications technologies converge.
- Exploring how industry, civil society and governments are adapting to technological developments and user generated content.
- Examining the value of a holistic approach to wellbeing online.

Further details including copies of presentations given are available at [www.internetsafetyzone.co.uk/root/News/European Safer Internet Day Conference 2006.htm](http://www.internetsafetyzone.co.uk/root/News/European_Safer_Internet_Day_Conference_2006.htm).

The Communications Market Interim report

On 28 February Ofcom published an interim report on the UK's communications markets. The report gives a comprehensive picture of the radio, telecommunications and television sectors, with a round-up of recent developments and the latest available data on:

- Industry size, structure and financing;
- Availability, penetration and use of products and services; and
- Consumer attitudes and behaviour.

Relevant findings included a drop in the 'reach' of television over the two years from December 2003 to December 2005. ('Reach' refers to the amount of people who watched at least 15 minutes of television within a one week period.) The biggest fall was among younger people: by 2.5% for 25-34 year-olds and by 2.9% for 16-24 year-olds. Amongst the 16-24 age group, 2.2% was lost in the last year alone. Total reach is still high (at 86.1% for 16-24 year olds in December 2005), but the drop hints at a potential shift in the position of TV within people's lives – especially the young's.

The Communications Market interim report also gives a useful overview of how commercial television and radio are funded. For example, television advertising expenditure in Q3 2005 was broken down by sector; financial services led the way, accounting for 13.4% of TV advertising expenditure, with food and motor vehicle advertising close behind at 11.5% and 11% respectively.

The report is available at www.ofcom.org.uk/research/cm/feb06_report/.

Internet Watch Foundation's annual report

On 8 March the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) released its annual report. The IWF is the only authorised organisation in the UK operating an internet 'hotline' (www.iwf.org.uk/reporting.htm) - for the public and IT professionals to report their exposure to potentially illegal child abuse images hosted on the internet anywhere in the world. They also take reports on criminally obscene and racist content hosted in the UK.

During 2005 the IWF processed around 24,000 reports from the public, more than ever, and reported a record 6,000 cases to the authorities of child abuse images hosted abroad.

In terms of country of origin, 40% of the child abuse content was traced to the USA, 28% to Russia, 17% to Asian countries, 13% to Europe and 0.4% to the UK (in 1997 the UK figure was 18%). Some 47% of child abuse websites were commercial Pay-Per-View, with 70% of these commercial websites hosted in either Russia or the USA.

One of the main services the IWF provides is a universal 'notice and takedown' service of illegal content within its remit to all service providers in the UK (where it notifies the host service provider who then takes the content offline). It also provides a comprehensive list of Child Abuse Image URL's for organisations such as Internet Service Providers, mobile network operators and search engines to block access to potentially illegal child abuse images.

At the UK Internet industry awards the 'ISPAs' (www.ispaawards.org.uk) the IWF award for developments in online safety was won by the Virtual Global Taskforce (www.virtualglobaltaskforce.com). The Virtual Global Taskforce was created in 2003 as an international alliance of law enforcement agencies working together to improve safety on the internet.

The shortlist of nominees for this award was compiled from recommendations by IWF members and the IWF Board selected the overall winner. The other finalists for the award were:

- Get Safe Online (www.getsafeonline.org/)
- UK Children Go Online (www.children-go-online.net)
- Know it all (www.childnet-int.org/kia/)
- Parentscentre (www.parentscentre.gov.uk)

New media literacy role for the BBC?

On 14 March the Department for Culture, Media and Sport published its white paper on the future of the BBC, available at www.bbccharterreview.org.uk. The white paper and draft new charter set out a role for the BBC in relation to media literacy within the context of 'sustaining citizenship and civil society'.

Tessa Jowell, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, had given an indication of the likely new role for the BBC in her keynote speech to the Oxford Media Convention in January. She also reiterated her belief in the importance of media literacy, saying that, in its broadest sense, it is as important to our development as print literacy was in the 19th century. The role of the media in mediating information about events or opinions means that it is crucial that people

understand how the media operates and so is an essential tool of modern citizenship. She also argued that people's greater confidence in their use of media will have a further positive impact upon the UK by fostering a dynamic, successful creative economy. Webcasts from the convention are available online at <http://webcast.oii.ox.ac.uk/?view=Category&CatID=9>.

Media literacy in Europe

Following a request from the European Parliament, the European Commission is setting up a 'media literacy expert group'. The group will analyse and define media literacy objectives and trends, highlight and promote good practices at a European level and propose actions. The initial proposed areas of focus for the group include advertising literacy, copyright awareness and media literacy for film. The group is composed of 25 European media literacy experts – including Ofcom - incorporating a mix of different competencies and backgrounds and will meet three times a year. The first meeting will be held on 30 March 2006. The Commission plans to launch a consultation on the findings of the group and a Communication on media literacy may follow - as well as further policy at a European level.

In focus

Ofcom's media literacy audit published

On 2 March Ofcom published a report of detailed research to assess the extent of adult media literacy in the UK.

Over 3,200 adults were interviewed for the research, focused on the four main digital platforms – digital television, digital radio, mobile phones and the internet - with analogue television and radio included where relevant. Attitudes towards, and the use of, other types of media such as computer games and the printed press were also investigated where it was useful to compare with the main platforms.

The audit drew on Ofcom's definition of media literacy as the ability to access, understand and create communications, with Ofcom's particular focus being on electronic communications. In this context, Ofcom's definition of access is much wider than availability or take-up of the platforms. Rather, it focuses upon interest, awareness, usage and competence relating to each platform. Understanding relates to people's understanding of how content (such as television and radio programmes, internet websites, or mobile video and text services) is created, funded and regulated.

Key findings from the report include:

- Television remains the most familiar, and popular, media platform for most people, with high levels of knowledge of the watershed (before which certain types of programme content, unsuitable for children, may not be shown), and how channels are funded. Although television is still mainly used for its 'traditional' functions, some 30% of those with digital TV say they have interacted with it.
- Whilst the number of people in the study who have access to digital radio services is high at 77%, one in three adults is unaware that they can listen to

digital radio services through either their digital TV or internet service. 27% of all UK adults say they ever listen to digital radio, and of these, over two-thirds (68%) say they now listen to more radio stations as a result.

- A key reason for people getting the internet is to access information, but there are many other reasons. Nearly three-quarters of internet users use email at least weekly. Levels of concern about internet content are higher than for other platforms, and concerns over entering personal details are prevalent. Interest and competence among internet users for various tasks is generally high, although nearly one-third are not confident about blocking email spam or computer viruses. Only one quarter of adults know the main way of funding for search engines, with greater awareness (at 46%) of how BBC websites are funded.
- Mobiles are an ubiquitous media technology for the 16-24 age group. Younger people have embraced the enhanced functionality of mobile phones, whilst for older users they remain predominantly communications tools. However, the use of the mobile as a 'memory device' to look back at stored texts and pictures is commonplace for all age groups.
- Age is a significant factor in media literacy. Over 65s have significantly lower levels of media literacy than other age groups. The research shows that amongst older people lower usage is partly attributable to a perceived lack of need for new digital services.
- Although there are significant differences between minority ethnic groups, on average levels of take-up and usage of digital platforms are higher than the UK average, partly because minority ethnic groups are younger than the UK population as a whole. However, the over 45s from minority ethnic groups have lower levels of media literacy compared to UK adults as a whole. Levels of trust in news, and knowledge of funding mechanisms and regulation, are lower overall. General levels of concern across the digital platforms are higher among minority ethnic groups than the UK average with the exception of the internet.
- Levels of concern about programming and other types of content vary across platforms, with little concern over mobile content. Levels of self reported ability and understanding in relation to content controls indicate that for the internet, a sizeable minority are not confident about blocking viruses or email scams. Most people are not yet aware of content controls on mobile phones.
- Levels of concern do not appear to be related to usage or uptake of the different media platforms, but are independent of these factors.
- Television is the most trusted provider of news, followed by radio, news websites and finally newspapers. Television is also the most commonly used provider of news, although most adults do use multiple sources.
- Many people, especially the elderly, say they prefer to learn media skills from family and friends and do so by themselves rather than in formal groups. The highest area of interest for many people is in learning how to use the internet. One third of people say they are interested in learning more about digital platforms and services.

The report is the first in a series of 6, a report on children's media literacy will also be published in the spring of 2006. In April Ofcom will separately publish in-depth reports on media literacy among minority ethnic groups, older people, people with a disability, and those in the devolved Nations and the English regions.

Ofcom recognises that there is a great deal of detail in these reports and that stakeholders will need some time to fully digest the findings. In the autumn Ofcom will hold a series of policy conferences across the UK to debate the findings and consider the policy implications for Ofcom and stakeholders.

The report is available online at www.ofcom.org.uk/advice/media_literacy/medlitpub.

The British Film Institute and media literacy

By Cary Bazalgette*, Head of *bfi* Education UK Wide

The British Film Institute (*bfi*) has been engaged in the development of education about the media for over thirty years. Our main focus is on the moving image media such as film and television, but we recognise that education about these media relates to the wider context of education about all forms of communication.

The *bfi* is funded by the UK Government's Department of Culture, Media and Sport, through the UK Film Council. It has existed since 1933 and is charged with developing understanding and appreciation of the moving image media. It is the home of the National Film and Television Archive, the *bfi* National Library, and the National Film Theatre (NFT) in London. Our education activities include the provision of educational events at the NFT, the publication of resources for teaching and learning about moving image media, training teachers in this field, and research into the most effective ways of developing media literacy. All these activities take place in the context of our overall advocacy role, aimed at raising the status and quality of moving image media education in the UK.

In the UK it is possible for students aged 14 and over to follow formal, specialist courses in Media Studies and Film Studies in school, leading to qualifications at the level of the General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) at age 16, at AS Level (age 17), at A2 Level (age 18) and at Advanced Highers (in Scotland only, at age 18). However, these courses are optional, and are not offered by every school. About 50,000 students take them annually, out of a total population of 1,800,000 in this age-group (i.e. fewer than 3%). There is also no statutory teacher training for these courses, so teachers have to acquire their knowledge and skills "on the job", as it were. There is of course a core of very experienced teachers who have been teaching these courses for many years, many of whom play a valuable role in creating resources and training for others.

A different and ultimately far more significant issue is that of what an acceptable level of media literacy would be for the general population. In the Charter for Media Literacy (available at www.bfi.org.uk) we have the beginnings of a consensus on what knowledge, skills and understanding would actually constitute media literacy. But different academic disciplines, corporate interests, pedagogic traditions and policy positions tussle for supremacy on this, and there are still many different views about the extent to which media education ought to be provided to every child within the statutory school curriculum, to ensure a basic level of media literacy in every school leaver. The predominant official view in most countries tends to be that, in terms of educational expenditure, media education has a far lower priority than "basic" literacy, numeracy and ICT (information and communication technologies) skills, and can probably be accommodated somehow within existing curricular requirements and training provision.

It is the *bfi*'s mission to try and change this view, at least in the UK. We argue that critical and creative competences in moving image media are (a) basic and (b) distinctive. If such competences are seen as "basic", then they must be acknowledged as part of every child's educational entitlement. If they are seen as "distinctive", then it cannot be assumed that teachers will somehow acquire the skills needed to foster them as part of their general training. All teachers need at least

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some training specifically in media education. This means that media education does require substantially more investment than it gets at the moment.

Making the case for such investment is not easy. The best arguments in the world will not displace the existing prioritization of literacy, numeracy and ICT in national targets. Our arguments do not attempt this. Instead, we demonstrate how media education can be seen as part of basic skills. Our case for this is laid out in two substantial teachers' guides, *Look Again!* for primary teachers and *Moving Images in the Classroom* for secondary teachers (both guides are freely available at www.bfi.org.uk/education/teaching/). We also foster classroom-based research, which explores what it can mean to integrate media education with other aspects of learning (our research is available at www.bfi.org.uk/education/research/).

Our approach to moving image media education combines three types of learning outcome:

- The acquisition of critical skills in interrogating, analyzing and evaluating moving image media products;
- A broad viewing experience ensuring that learners have encountered many different types of moving image media from different sources; and
- Creative skills in making meaning with moving image media, with a particular emphasis on digital editing.

Many other media education initiatives focus on one of these areas at the expense of the rest. We argue that learners will only become fully literate in these media if they have opportunities to develop all three types of outcome. A key element which is often left out of media literacy initiatives is the middle one: acquiring a broader range of cultural experience. We find that when teachers and learners have opportunities to discover the richness of historical and non-mainstream moving image culture, it transforms their attitude to the medium, and raises their expectations about what the critical and creative strands of learning can address. They begin to understand that this area of learning involves real cultural entitlement, and teachers recognise that they have responsibilities to introduce such material to learners. *Watch This!*, our event with the Barbican Cinema in July 2005, was a public debate about whether there are films that all children should see by the age of 14. To our surprise, the extensive media coverage of this event was largely sympathetic, both to the concept and to the list of 10 films nominated by children's film organisations across Europe (the full list is at www.bfi.org.uk/education/coursesevents/conferences/watchthis/top50.html).

Our teachers' guides and research reports can only make the case for the value of media education, but teachers need to know what it actually looks like in practice. We publish a range of classroom resources in a variety of formats – print, video, DVD, CD Rom and online – which provide substantial and detailed practical guidance for teachers. Some of these resources are aimed at the teachers of specialist courses, and some are aimed at general classroom teachers working with the 5-14 age groups. Our trio of “story” resources based on complete, high quality, non-mainstream short films – *Starting Stories* for 3-7 years olds, *Story Shorts* for 7-11 year olds, and *Screening Stories* for 11-14 year olds – have been particularly successful in encouraging teachers to use films within the context of literacy lessons, but at the same time as an object of study in their own right.

Nevertheless, the approaches we advocate in our guides and resources can still be challenging for teachers who have been trained to be suspicious of film and

television as potentially adverse influences on children. We therefore offer a range of professional development opportunities for teachers. For more committed teachers we provide three distance-learning courses, accredited at Master's level, and two annual conferences specifically for those teaching Film and Media Studies in the post-16 sector – see the website for more details. But to build a nationwide infrastructure for moving image media literacy, we are now working with Local Authorities to train Lead Practitioners who are nominated as part of Local Authority action plans to develop moving image media literacy in their schools. Over 40 Local Authorities in England (more than a third) are already committed to this scheme and have allocated between them a total of over £750,000 to the development of this area. By March 2006 we will have trained 150 Lead Practitioners in England and we have already helped to train 35 in Scotland. This interest and commitment is based primarily upon their perception of the cultural value of moving image media, not on anxieties about their possible adverse effects. Our message, therefore, is place cultural value at the centre of the argument for media literacy, and the rest will follow.

For more information about the *bfi*'s work in media education and the development of moving image media literacy, please contact education@bfi.org.uk or visit www.bfi.org.uk/education/.

Events

Silver Surfers' Week 2006

Silver Surfers' Week is a week-long event where local organisations and groups provide computer and internet taster sessions for older adults who want to learn and experience first hand the benefits of being digitally connected. It is a joint collaboration between Age Concern and Digital Unite (the new name for Hairnet UK). In the past 4 years, both Age Concern and Digital Unite have hosted up to 1,000 events where local organisations were able to provide computer training and internet taster sessions to Silver Surfers, both new and already familiar to computers. If your organisation is interested in getting involved with the Silver Surfer Campaign 2006, visit www.silversurfer.org.uk/involved_eventholders.html.

Date: 20 - 26 May 2006

Venue: UK-wide

Contact: Age Concern England, 020 8765 7200, www.silversurfer.org

Widening participation in media literacy during Adult Learners' Week

This year marks the fifteenth Adult Learners' Week, co-ordinated by NIACE – the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education. Running from 20th to 26th May, the Week is the UK's largest festival of learning and is an important means of showcasing the ways in which we can create and maintain a more skilled and knowledgeable workforce whilst at the same time building learning communities in which people can explore shared enthusiasms and work together as active citizens.

Adult Learners' Week brings together broadcasters, government departments and agencies, libraries, workplaces, employers and national and local educational and

community providers in partnership, enabling it to reach very large numbers of adults countrywide. With Ofcom's support in 2005, it was possible to involve a number of adult learning providers in different locations and settings in media literacy activities.

Once again in 2006, with Ofcom's support, the promotion of media literacy is a key theme for Adult Learners' Week and NIACE is encouraging organisations – such as colleges, voluntary and community sector providers, museums, libraries, BBC Learning Centres and media companies - to offer open days during and around Adult Learners' Week, enabling adults to try out different media literacy tasters.

NIACE is asking as many organisations as possible to develop and promote these events for more and different adult learners during the Week. Using existing technical facilities (e.g. college/university media studies departments and BBC Learning Centres), this should be an effective way of reaching adults, increasing access and developing competences. By broadening access and widening participation through taster sessions, it's hoped that adults will be given the chance to learn about – and try out – relevant equipment such as digital and video cameras, editing/recording packages, mixing equipment and so on.

In 2005, a media literacy guide - *And Now Press the Red Button* – was produced for Adult Learners' Week and copies of this are still available – e-mail alw@niace.org.uk to order a hard copy or download the publication from www.niace.org.uk/ALW/2006/Themes/MediaLiteracyGuide.pdf.

For Adult Learners' Week 2006, NIACE will be producing a companion toolkit for providers offering ideas, templates, resources and links to assist them in organising media literacy-based sessions and workshops. With the help of such a resource, it is hoped that Adult Learners' Week 2006 will engage more people in media literacy activities, reinforcing the value of “accessing, understanding and creating communications in a variety of contexts”, including workplaces, community organisations, further and higher education institutions and other public bodies.

To find out more about Adult Learners' Week or to order from a range of publicity materials to support local events, visit www.alw.org.uk. To order copies of the 2006 media literacy toolkit, e-mail alw@niace.org.uk or phone NIACE's Campaigns & Promotions team on 0116 204 4200. To promote your media literacy event in and around Adult Learners' Week, visit the on-line calendar at www.niace.org.uk/alw/2006/Calendar/Default.htm.

The Media Studies Conference

Organised by bfi Education, The Media Studies Conference is an annual three-day event offering 16+ Media and Film Studies teachers a variety of speakers from the worlds of film, television and new media. As well as teacher-led workshops on syllabus topics such as genre, World cinema, course planning and TV drama, there are seminars sessions, opportunities to meet media professionals as well as plenary presentations.

Date: Wednesday 5th - Friday 7th July

Venue: National Film Theatre, London

Contact: www.bfi.org.uk/education/coursesevents/conferences/mediastudies2006/ or contact bfi Education on 020 7957 4779

About the media literacy bulletin

What is Ofcom?

Ofcom is the independent regulator and competition authority for the UK communications industries, with responsibilities across television, radio, telecommunications and wireless communications services.

What is media literacy?

We have defined media literacy as the ability to access, understand and create communications in a variety of contexts. At its simplest level it is the ability to use a range of media and be able to understand the information received. At a more advanced level it moves from recognising and understanding the information to critical thinking skills such as questioning, analysing, appreciating and evaluating that information.

What is Ofcom's role?

Ofcom has a duty under section 11 of the Communications Act 2003 to 'promote media literacy'. We work with stakeholders to help focus on the present and future media literacy needs of all members of society.

Get involved

We want to keep our stakeholders informed about developments in media literacy. Do let us know if you are running an event, undertaking research or have published recently on any aspect of media literacy. We can put information up on our website (www.ofcom.org.uk/advice/media_literacy/) or in our bulletin. If you run or are aware of a media literacy initiative that could be covered in more depth in one of our 'In Focus' articles get in touch. Also let us know if you have colleagues who may be interested in receiving our bulletin.

If you have any other suggestions or feedback for this bulletin contact media.literacy@ofcom.org.uk

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Stop message

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