Digital Literacies in the Age of Sight and Sound

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Education prepares learners to be stewards of knowledge. Central to this mission is a set of core values that support what it means to be a literate human being. However, currently these values often do not take into account the needs of the new breed of learners or the existence of new forms of global communications. Whether through image-saturated television, movies, video games, Internet sites, or the news media, young adults currently navigate within a world rich with sight and sound.

Screentime—with its nonlinear clickability and elements of image, color, sequence, sound, and motion—has been added to the once privileged paper space as a primary organizing format for expressing and exchanging knowledge. Yet most educators consider the foundation of literacy to be the ability to read and write. Few broaden the definition to include the ability to decipher, interpret, express, and effectively communicate ideas with sights and sounds.

This issue explores ways that educators might employ new digital literacies to prepare learners for academic success, professional advancement and, ultimately, global citizenship. Authors describe how educators prepare students to face the growing glut of written, auditory and visual data, and, ultimately, global citizenship. They engage and challenge students, and initiate debate on ethical issues about how new media both manipulates and benefits society.

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