

MEDIA LITERACY
Keys to Interpreting Media Messages
INDIAN EDITION

Art Silverblatt, Anubhuti Yadav & Vedabhyas Kundu
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Media Literacy is one of the new-age phenomena like the ones emerging post-globalization. Some of them are information literacy, digital literacy, financial literacy, cultural literacy, etc. Some of these types can be subsumed under the term literacy as a skill-based extension of the literacy skills. Media literacy has emerged from the extension of the term media, the plural form of medium. The term media has transcended its narrow sense and developed into a metaphor for what Marshall McLuhan refers to as the phrase 'Extension of Man'. The evolution of media has been organic in nature where it has evolved itself into different semiotic systems for communication. These semiotic systems collectively referred to as media have also created a socio-cultural context in an organic and mutual relationship with our pre-existing linguistic contexts. Media, therefore, is not delimited to the role of medium, but it has become an extension of our language. The idea of media literacy is the result of this evolutionary process of the organic and mutual relationship between media and language.

Media literacy like other types of literacies is generally characterised as the ability to understand, analyse, evaluate, appreciate, and create media in different forms. Media literacy, therefore, includes skills to create

messages using various forms of media for a variety of purposes. With the recent developments in media, these skills also require critical ability to understand the role of media in society and the multifaceted function of the messages. Media literacy thus includes the competence of critical interpretation. The skill of critical interpretation is essential to decode the media messages.

The volume in review is the Indian edition of the book entitled, *Media Literacy: Keys to Interpreting Media Messages* by Prof. Art Silverblatt, Prof. Anubhuti Yadav, and Dr Vedabhyas Kundu is an outcome of the project titled *Digital International Media Literacy Education (DIMLE)*. Originally the book was published in 1995 as the first edition by Greenwood Publishing Group. The Indian edition of the book appeared as an e-edition in 2018 and was subsequently published as a print edition in 2022.

The Indian edition of this volume is simply divided into seven chapters unlike the international edition which is organised into four parts and thirteen chapters therein. With a snapshot of the content, it is evident that the Indian edition of the volume is entirely a new re-creation of the text and therefore, it is organised accordingly.

Chapter one, Introduction to Media Literacy presents an illustrative discussion on the basic concepts, e.g. elements of media literacy, obstacles to media literacy, affective nature of various types of media, and issues related to the levels of meaning and messages. The chapter successfully initiates the reader into the subject and also helps to conclude the lessons by providing a brief and crisp summary of the content.

Chapter two entitled Process Overview: Elements of Communication discusses technical aspects of communication and media by revisiting the different models of communication and mass communication, audience preference, audience, media multitasking, and audience reception theory. The chapter also presents the reader with some media literacy tips. This section of the volume is a little longer due to its content, however, the presentation of the content is lively and lucid and finally, all is supplemented with a summary.

The third chapter refers to the subtitle of the volume, i.e. Keys to Interpreting Media Messages deals with vital topics like historical context, stages of evolution, the evolution of media systems, and systems approach to media history followed by a summary of the chapter. The content is brief yet it presents all the important issues clearly and concisely way that makes the book easy to read especially for a reader from a non-media background.

The fourth chapter entitled Cultural Context deliberates on the issues related to the media and culture. It discusses the relationship between media and popular culture, the Opportunity Agenda, and the mutual relationship between media and culture.

The fifth chapter with its title Media Structure highlights the issues of the impact of the consolidation of media

ownership on content and also the issue of copyright. The presentation and deliberation of the content are quite illustrative and interesting. Most of the description involves cases and examples from the Indian context that suffice the relevance of this volume.

The sixth chapter entitled Keys to Interpret Media Messages: Framework is another vital addition to the issues presented in chapter three with similar titles having different contents. This section begins with media literacy tips, the function of the genre and evolution of genre and a conclusion for discerning keys to interpreting media messages followed by a summary of the chapter content.

The seventh and the last chapter is titled Production Elements highlights the media elements like colour, lighting techniques, shape, scales, relative position, movement, angle, cutline, word choice, and manipulation of messages. The contents of the chapter primarily designed for the students of media are presented lucidly and therefore, despite the use of media jargon, the text remains readable for a common reader also. The illustrations used in the descriptions are of mixed variety; drawing from both Indian as well as international contexts. The chapter ends with a summary of the contents.

The volume ends with Endnotes including Video Sources, Graph Sources and Image Sources and also an Index. The present volume, similar to its original counterpart, seems to have used the endnote approach to avoid putting a lengthy bibliography at the end that could have been cumbersome and confusing especially for a common reader. However, the present volume has skipped the section on Suggested Reading for unknown reasons which could have been a good help for the readers.

The Indian edition of the volume *Media Literacy: Keys to Interpreting Media Messages* by Prof. Art Silverblatt, Prof. Anubhuti Yadav, and Dr Vedabhyas Kundu is concise yet comprehensive, clear yet interesting, and introductory yet vast in capturing and providing information on media literacy. It is also successful in its adaptive recreation of the content to suit the Indian readers. It

has become a different book altogether and therefore, a reader having read the original international edition of the book, can venture into reading this one without any loss of interest. The book is equally useful for media students as well as a common reader intending to explore the nuances of media and media literacy.