

## Chapter 16

# Disrupting the Media Literacy Learning Process: Building a Community Media Lab to Transform Digital Journalism Education at HBCUs

**L. Simone Byrd**  
*Alabama State University, USA*

### ABSTRACT

*Community media labs (CMLs) are becoming significant catalysts in driving knowledge, innovation, cultural awareness and talent development. Structurally, these are cooperative efforts engaging academic institutions, media and tech companies and venture capitalists for the purpose of collaboration, innovation, education and monetization. Increasingly, higher education institutions are participating in and designing curricula around these enterprises to offer students more cutting-edge information and media literacy training. Thus, this chapter recommends a preliminary framework for establishing a CML partnership between Historically Black Colleges/Universities (HBCUs) and a local media outlet. HBCUs have a long-standing record of activism, as well as civic and community engagement and, although CMLs are culturally enlightening and worthwhile activities for any institution of higher education to create a footprint beyond campus, there is significant opportunity for further development and innovative creation from within to aid in the future generational sustainability of HBCUs.*

### INTRODUCTION

It is not preposterous to suggest that we now reside within an overtly, information-driven culture. This is an environment that is digitally-centered and extremely oversaturated. We are bombarded with a repetitive, 24-hour news cycle, which has become increasingly more pervasive and powerful. The evolution has transformed from the 'Breaking News' scrolling headlines on every major cable news network to a steady blitz of endless Smartphone notifications and updates. This signifies a 'new normal' of modern

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-4059-5.ch016

## ***Disrupting the Media Literacy Learning Process***

American life. This ‘new normal’ is one where the lines are blurred more than ever, with very little distinction about the type and quality of news we’re being exposed to. Explicitly, entertainment news is reported with the same or more vigor as news covering social and political issues. In October 2017, Fox News announced new programming, which included a series to be anchored by TMZ founder, Harvey Levin. The series title? ‘Objectified’. When interviewed by the *Washington Post* about the new show, the host stated:

*‘I am a journalist. I’ve worked in news for decades. You know, I was an investigative reporter for CBS in L.A., for NBC in L.A., for decades. And TMZ is journalism. We employ the same skills at TMZ as you do. Stories have to be accurate. They have to be researched. They have to be fair’* (Borchers, 2017).

As the interview continues, interestingly Levin admits to Borchers (2017), that the show is not really journalistic in nature because it’s not their intention to seek and extract facts from the interviewees, but to examine the personal stories of the individuals being interviewed. Precisely, “the contention is that a show need not be journalistic to be newsworthy. Given the influence of Stephen Colbert, Jimmy Kimmel and ‘Saturday Night Live’ on contemporary political discourse, it is hard to argue against it.”

And this is where we find ourselves in today’s environment; literally debating whether or not something that refers to itself as ‘news programming’ need not necessarily be held to journalistic standards. The truth of the matter is that with the rise and onslaught of digital communication, news—whether real or fictionalized—never sleeps. This is particularly true in reference to how everyday citizens seek, obtain, consume, and in some cases, create news. Culturally, this is not limited to one generation. Smartphones have changed the way we all access news, and it has also upended the industry by empowering and providing us with ways to actively report and share news in ways that were never possible before; mainly via video, Facebook livecasting, photo-sharing, online conversations and other technical mechanisms. In sum, whether it is traditional cable news or the growing, user-influenced social media news engine, it is always ‘on’ and now dominates the vast information landscape. Although, there are benefits to have such a voluminous amount of information accessible within a few clicks and taps of our fingertips, there is a very real and symbolic downside. Somehow, we rested on our laurels and became entangled in the web of constant messages we’re fed on a daily basis. As a result, the standards changed and/or ceased to exist. McChesney (2005) wrote about this very metamorphosis before the spectacular rise of the digital culture:

*Even though many Americans agree that our media system fails to promote an informed participating citizenry and instead bombards us with unwanted hyper-commercialism, that is not enough to generate action. One crucial barrier keeps citizens from opposing the current structure: the notion that the U.S. media system is based upon the competitive market, and the competitive market, despite its limitations, is the best system possible because it ‘gives the people what they want’.*

What happens when this competition and commercialism increases to a fever pitch, all while invading all aspects of society and affects the democratic process, not to mention how people collect and process information? How do we come to know what information can be trusted as well as separate fact from satire? Furthermore, who and what determines what is legitimate news? Meanwhile, citizens have essentially lost trust in mass media and literacy skills are being tested with each Google search, article share via social media.

14 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

[www.igi-global.com/chapter/disrupting-the-media-literacy-learning-process/204006](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/disrupting-the-media-literacy-learning-process/204006)

## Related Content

---

### Board Game Supporting Learning Prim's Algorithm and Dijkstra's Algorithm

Wen-Chih Chang, Te-Hua Wang and Yan-Da Chiu (2010). *International Journal of Multimedia Data Engineering and Management* (pp. 16-30).

[www.irma-international.org/article/board-game-supporting-learning-prim/49147](http://www.irma-international.org/article/board-game-supporting-learning-prim/49147)

### Network Address Management in MANETs Using an Ant Colony Metaphor

Alvaro Pachón and Juan M. Madrid (2011). *Emerging Technologies in Wireless Ad-hoc Networks: Applications and Future Development* (pp. 162-180).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/network-address-management-manets-using/50323](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/network-address-management-manets-using/50323)

### Discrete Transform Based Image Fusion: A Review

Umesh Kumar, Neha Gopaliya, Uma Sharma and Sandeep Gupta (2017). *International Journal of Multimedia Data Engineering and Management* (pp. 43-49).

[www.irma-international.org/article/discrete-transform-based-image-fusion/178933](http://www.irma-international.org/article/discrete-transform-based-image-fusion/178933)

### 3D Music Impact on Autonomic Nervous System Response and Its Potential Mechanism

Yi Qin, Huayu Zhang, Yuni Wang, Mei Mao and Fuguo Chen (2021). *International Journal of Multimedia Data Engineering and Management* (pp. 1-16).

[www.irma-international.org/article/3d-music-impact-on-autonomic-nervous-system-response-and-its-potential-mechanism/271430](http://www.irma-international.org/article/3d-music-impact-on-autonomic-nervous-system-response-and-its-potential-mechanism/271430)

### Dirac Video Codec: Introduction

Kok Keong, Myo Tun and Yoong Choon Chang (2011). *Streaming Media Architectures, Techniques, and Applications: Recent Advances* (pp. 58-94).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/dirac-video-codec/47515](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/dirac-video-codec/47515)