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# *Media Literacy: Historical and Theoretical bedplate*

During Gutenberg's time and what followed, literacy meant reading and writing ability, which was the focus of not only education but also politicians, social reformers and philosophers. The population being literacy, for a variety of reasons, could seek for the information, being informed of daily news, to communicate with others, and to produce informed decisions based on information on everyday life.

Based on the above, the literate persons were better citizens, parents and workers. As the literacy grew throughout the world during the twentieth century, a new feeling emerged that it is not just enough to know how to write and read (1). In a world where media dominate, an individual must be able to understand, sort and analyze the information he needs within the garbage of which he is bombarded each day (over the social networks and other mass media).

In the second half of the twentieth century, finally, the name was given to the skill of knowledge of skills related to the ability to decode and process messages and symbols transmitted over the media: *The Media literacy*. According to the National Association for Media Literacy (NAMLE – (2), the person with media literacy is capable of accessing, analyzing, evaluating, and communicating with information. [John Culkin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_M._Culkin), a pioneer in media literacy, wrote: "*The new mass media - film, radio, TV - are new languages and their grammar is still unknown*." Media literacy seeks to give the ability to consumers of the media to understand this new language.

And, of course, the question arises immediately about why there is a need to be a media literate: "Media (non)literacy is for manipulators. For the people: Media literacy must be and will be a toy - against the manipulators. "- ([S. Hadžialić, 2015](http://www.eurasiareview.com/08092015-south-east-europe-on-edge-of-civilization-getting-to-know-the-individuals-better-than-they-know-themselves-essay/))

***Objectivity or subjectivity***

Of course, media literacy also strengthens the power of truth in journalism, as it warns people of the caution and the need to counteract the influence of media companies and media messages. From the truth of the head does not hurt, but from half-truths and lies, really hurts. Media literacy is achieved by flexibility and conscience. Journalism that respects professional ethical standards and thus enhances the ability to develop the subjects of political pluralism in the context of the development of a healthy society, plays a major role in the protection and development of media literacy only if it is devoted to the following indications:

- If it is truthful and fair in terms of providing objective and accurate information to the public.

But there is always that, *but* ... It is believed that the media are making a possible or, if nothing else, encouraging, democracy. The media provide, as said, the information needed by the public to understand the society and to make intelligent decisions both on the elections and on the realization of public affairs. This is certainly a worthwhile direction. But this is a little bit more than a bribe, shaped precisely by the media itself-and especially by the very informative media. Let's take the example, the United States - where we have major players in politics, mostly two parties - overwhelming other political entities within media coverage.

These media with ideological identities are just a bit more than the platform for narrow-minded propaganda, which respects either democrats or republicans, liberals, or conservatives. What we have there is "lobbycracy(3)" before democracy. If nothing else, in the US there is a system in which the chosen plutocrats are often bought by lobbyists or large corporations and institutions. Before I continue just to underline my humble opinion – *Lobbying in US is like Corruption in Europe* – I do not see difference. Young and people eager to work, and in the same time "professional journalists", instead of becoming language lovers, become "technologists". Rather than knightly fighting windmills, they are more than most pleased to hover in the wind of nihilism. Rather than being public officials – to serve the public, they become corporate officials or private entrepreneurs. Rather than being objective, they become subjective and relativistic, and instead journalists become communicators and *spin doctors*.

There is no big difference either in the area of South East Europe, with honorable exceptions that, unfortunately, are slowly disappearing and dying but surviving thanks to the virtual world of the internet - for example of [FERAL TRIBUNE](http://feral.audiolinux.com/) in Croatia, [SLOBODNA BOSNIA](http://www.slobodna-bosna.ba/) in Bosnia and Herzegovina and / or [REPUBLIKA](http://www.republika.co.rs/) in Serbia.

Introducing, apropos “reading” media does not change the text / audio and / or video recordings. This only extends our understanding of the mentioned. "This is why much more critical thinking and media criticism is required in schools at the very early stages of life (1)." (J.Stauber, 2006)

***The impact of media on our children***

Whenever we see [the impact of media on our children](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2792691/), we really need to be concerned about the gap in literacy within the educational system in the areas of South East Europe, and especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is necessary to shape such a system of education to teach children how to avoid being (ab)used by the media.

Children need to learn how, through the craftsmanship, a particular message is structured and why, what is used to transfer it (which gadgets) to keep their attention and what ideas have been sent to them. In a culture where the media is impenetrable and pervading all the pores of the societies, children need to learn to think critically about what they see, hear, or read. Indeed, education of children must not end without the above.

Let's look at the problems within the area of the surroundings in SEE, but also domestic ones in BiH, when talking about the media and the relationship towards children.

[*Croatia*](https://www.unicef.hr/en/vijest/the-first-media-literacy-days-in-croatia/): Loss of the Right to Privacy; concealed advertising; spinning; violation of children's rights; unethical visual communication in the media; reporting on accidents, killings, catastrophes; reporting on murders; advertisements, language errors; sensationalism in the media; Media - Courts of the New Age; social networks and negative examples of child manipulation.

[Serbia](https://www.unicef.org/serbia/en/media-centre): weak visibility; displaying children in predominantly negative contexts, either as vulnerable and helpless, both problematic and dangerous; a superficial and sensationalist approach; spinning, the use of the child as a means to attract attention to other topics, or to attach importance to other subjects; implicit or explicit evaluation of children, solely on the basis of adult standards; stereotyped, often black-and-white displaying (angels or devils), including prejudices about today's children due to ignorance and fear of the new; indifference to developmental, individual and other peculiarities and the needs of children.

[Bosnia and Herzegovina](https://www.unicef.org/bih/media_15109.html): When Bosnia and Herzegovina is in question, it is enough, in addition to the copy/paste of the above mentioned from Serbia and Croatia, quote the text from the BHRT portal from 06.1.2016. with the [title "BH JOURNALISTS APPEALING THAT MEDIA SHOWS AND PROVIDE LIABILITY AND PROFESSIONALITY”](http://www.bhrt.ba/vijesti/bih/bh-novinari-apeliraju-da-mediji-pokazu-odgovornost-i-profesionalnost/) and it will be told to you: “The Management Board of the Association of BH Journalists urges media editors in BiH, and especially editors of news portals and online media platforms to, with much more responsibility, sensibility and journalistic professionalism report on the upcoming marking of the Day of Republic of Srpska on 9 January, as well as on current events related to the tragic death of a 14-year-old boy from Sarajevo. On the portal Klix.ba, [comments appeared](https://bhnovinari.ba/bs/2016/01/06/saopenje-povodom-pozivanja-na-nasilje-putem-online-medija-i-drutvenih-mrea/) in which somebody calls on "killing Serb children", “tossing on a roll” and "raping of woman" of all those who will mark the Day of Republic of Srpska. At the same time, on the social networks (Facebook and Instagram), a list of six juveniles was published by groups of peers and their irresponsible parents made guilty of the deaths [of the little boy Mahir](https://www.balkaneu.com/mahir-die/), and called for violence against them, the lighting up of the International School in Sarajevo and other destructive procedures towards children in that school and their parents.

[The Management board of BH journalists](http://www.bhrt.ba/vijesti/bih/bh-novinari-apeliraju-da-mediji-pokazu-odgovornost-i-profesionalnost/) expresses concern for the brutal spread of hate speech, inter-religious and inter-ethnic intolerance, as well as calls for violence against children, schools and any person in BiH. It is unacceptable that the media, editors and journalists publish content referring to the lynch, contributing to the spread of fear and intolerance, apropos to get into privacy, exposing the minor to the court of public of the minorities and their families. Such actions are contrary to the code of journalistic ethics, standards of professional and responsible journalism, as well as to all international conventions on the protection of fundamental human rights, the rights of the child and the liberty of freedom. Such acts are also a criminal offense under the laws of BiH, and in contrary are to all human and democratic values, " it was pointed out within the report of the Association of BiH Journalists. Management board of BH journalist invites the Complaints Commission of the Press Council and the Communications Regulatory Agency of BiH to request from the editors the removal of inappropriate and inflammatory contents from the media or comments from portal visitors. At the same time, BiH journalists call cybercriminal police units, that are working within the security and police agencies, to detect and punish the people who spread hate through the internet and social networks and call on violence.”

***Media literacy empowers people or…***

“Of course, the new media are guiding us to have abilities and skills to understand where visual, hearing, and digital literacy is intercepted. This includes the ability to understand the power of picture and sound, recognition, and the need for that power, to be able manipulate and transform digital media, and to be able to distribute them by spreading, and to be more easily adapted to new forms. "([New Media Consortium, 2005](http://www.nmc.org/pdf/Global_Imperative.pdf))

Media literacy empowers people not only to be critically focused but also to be creative producers of unseen number of messages using image, language, and sound. Communication technologies transform society; they affect understanding of us, our community, the environment (narrower and wider) and our different cultures, making media literacy a very important life skill of the XXI century.

Specifically, when we talk about introducing media literacy to schools, it helps pupils/students to increase understanding of the way how media works, how media are organized, and most importantly, how media creates reality.

Media literacy refers to compiling, understanding, interpreting, analyzing and with respecting of the language and texts ... as well as printed and unprinted media.

It is absurd what I am going to say (write), but it is proved very many times, if we only compare the statements of politicians in Bosnia and Herzegovina just a few years ago and now. So, in order to make and "absurd" to become the truth, I have to set up a scientific thesis: The government(s) is(are) lying.

Example: "*Recovering flooded homes, bigger salaries and pensions, better working conditions, ending agony for outcast workers ... pre-election promises coming from all sides, and often preceded by the Federal Government, which in the previous mandate was obliged to take care of everything listed. Ten days before the elections, there is no account of how much the promises are really a real ones (1)*."Specifically, then, before the 2014 elections The FBiH Government has just spoken of the need to work on what The Government of FBiH should do in the previous period, and did not do.

Media literacy is critically important for a democratic society. [Amy Goodman from Democracy Now](http://www.democracynow.org/about/staff) stressed: "*A great journalist,* [*IF Stone,*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I._F._Stone) *told students of journalism that there are four words they need to remember: The government is lying. I am convinced that many people have a natural skepticism about what national officials say. The problem is when the media play as a megaphone for these in power. The media should be, as we call our book "*[*Exception to the Rulers*](https://www.democracynow.org/gifts/all-products/the-exception-to-the-rulers-exposing-oily-politicians-war-profiteers-the-media-that-love-them-paperback-)*" People in the Soviet Union knew to read between the lines when they red* [*PRAVDA*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pravda)*. Here, in this country-USA, the media behave like a belt with a running ribbon for administration laws (as well as previous administrations)*. " (6)

Media culture is the result of industrialization of information and culture. The mechanism of media democracy, just as [Thomas Meyer](https://www.amazon.com/Media-Democracy-How-Colonize-Politics/dp/0745628443) says, works *through the mutual play of institutional structures of opportunities, economic interests and cultural dispositions.*

Images, sounds and spectacles help in the production of weaving of living, where we have the dominant time of leisure, during which the political views and social behaviors are shaped, in which the material is ensured from which people itself falsify their identities.

When we talk about literacy in today's society of new media, intertwined with traditional forms of exclusive consciousness - especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina, being literate means being engaged (S.Hadzialic, 2010: “I am not national artist – I am artist of the nations”), active, critical, and create users not only from the written and spoken language, but also from the visual language of the film and television, and above all new media. Visual communication is part of weaving of modern life.

Notes:

1. In Bosnia and Herzegovina that presents a problem to politicians over here. Here we have a slogan: “More you know you can do less and less you know you can do more.” (S. Hadžialić, 2010) because everything went down to the party membership and/or religious and/or national/ethnical belongings/affiliations. So, media literacy is for sure No 1. For the politicians here (because when somebody knows, he/she asks, expects answerss and if the answers are not the satisfactory ones, than...) and a lot of water will flow through our rivers until media literacy becomes a obligatory part of the educational system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also in Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia...(all former ex-Yugoslavia republics).
2. Info: Kate Moody, “John Culkin, SJ: The Man Who Invented Media Literacy: 1928–1993,” Center for Media
3. An example of a protest of Democrats in the US Congress, June 23, 2016, because of the inability to make changes to the Arms Law - most Republicans do not want to put on the Agenda a Law - precisely because of the strong armed lobby that controls them - only for one day, after the massacre in Orlando, on June 12, 2016, where the theorist killed 50 and injured 53 people, sold 30,000 different types of weapons online in the US: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/powerpost/wp/2016/06/22/democrats-stage-protest-on-house-floor-to-force-gun-control-votes/?noredirect=on>
4. “We need a lot more critical thinking and media criticism taught in schools at a very early age.” John Stauber author “The Best War Ever” (interview from September 2006): <https://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/John_Stauber>
5. Zurnal.ba: <http://zurnal.ba/novost/18332/sve-predizborne-lazi-federalne-vlade-povecanje-penzija-rudarski-raj-zaposljavanje-autoput>
6. „Gen. Colin Powell gave his speech at the UN. Of the 393 interviews done by the 4 major nightly news casts around the issue of the war, ABC, CBS, NBC and PBS’s Newshour, only 3 were with antiwar representatives. That does not represent mainstream America. At the time a majority were against the invasion, for inspections and for diplomacy. This is not mainstream media, this is an extreme media, beating the drums for war and misusing the public airwaves.”- **Amy Goodman from Democrac Now.**