BBC MEDIA LITERACY STRATEGY

MAY 2013

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The need to promote media literacy, as outlined in the 2006 BBC Charter Agreement, is addressed by the BBC's commitments, under the Public Purposes, to help people to "build their confidence and skills, and encourage audiences to move from passive consumption to active participation and constructive engagement".[i]

In the BBC's plan for delivering the Public Purposes,[ii] Media Literacy is loosely defined as the ability to "access, understand and create different types of media" (p.5). In recent years, BBC Media Literacy policy has focussed on helping people to develop the 'access/use' skills, specifically getting people online for the first time.

However, research indicates that a strategic refocus of the BBC Media Literacy policy from promoting 'access' skills (getting online) to include more of the 'understand' and 'create' skills is critical if we are to help our audience engage with, and benefit from, the full range of evolving BBC content and services - whether that's a new version of iPlayer, YouView, Connected Red Button, The Digital Public Space, or Britain in a Day.

The 2012 Understanding Digital Capability survey, commissioned by BBC Learning, suggests that many of us find learning new online skills daunting, with 1 in 3 of us relying on others for help to learn new things. It's not unusual for us to avoid trying new tasks unless we feel completely able to do so, even though many of us are actually more competent than we think.[iii] This piece of research also shows that some people want to learn more but don't know where to start.[iv]

The BBC is well-positioned to be the place where people go to develop their media literacy skills and confidence. This document outlines the future strategic approach for achieving this.

At the heart of this strategy are four overarching objectives which will be supported by long-term editorial work-streams and a comprehensive online content strategy. Specifically, the BBC will:

1. Work in partnership to provide clear messages around benefits of emerging technologies and building digital skills and confidence of those newly online or lacking confidence.

2. Help all of our audiences develop the media literacy skills and confidence required to better understand the media environment, including how content is made, presented and accessed.

3. Help parents and children understand and manage the risks associated with online activity.

4. Encourage audiences to experiment creatively with digital media in order to contribute to the BBC's output and participate in wider society and engage within and across communities of interest.

Although independent, this strategy is aligned to that of Go ON UK[1] and other key partners in the fields of digital inclusion, online safety, digital participation and digital content generation.

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[1] *Go ON UK is a cross-sector charity established in 2012 to encourage and support people, businesses and charities to enjoy the benefits of being online. Go ON UK has eight founding partners – Age UK, BBC, Big*

INTRODUCTION

Built on the Reithian pillars of inform, educate and entertain, the BBC aims to reach everyone, equally, without privilege or favour. In the past, the near-universal nature of TV technology meant that virtually no group was excluded on the basis of skill, all that was required was a suitable receiving device.

The rate of technological developments now mean that owning, or having access to, a suitable receiving device may not be enough to guarantee access to the best of the BBC's content. The audience also needs to develop digital skills and confidence to fully benefit from emerging technology such as IP-enabled services like Connected TV and BBC Online 'products' such as News, Sport and the iPlayer which are increasingly delivered across four screens – desktop and laptop, tablet, smartphone and connected TVs.

In the Sustaining Citizenship and Civil Society Public Purpose, the BBC Trust stated that "The BBC should help people become 'media-literate' – giving them the confidence to make full use of all media including information technologies. The BBC will help its audiences engage critically with media – to find what they are looking for from trustworthy sources, to understand what it is about, to form an opinion about it and, where necessary, to respond to and interact with it."[v]

The BBC responded with a commitment to "support new and unsure users or those with additional needs in building their confidence and skills, and encourage audiences to move from passive consumption to active participation and constructive engagement."[vi] The response also says, "Now that internet take-up has become widespread in the UK, the BBC can adopt a deeper role, building on its position of a trusted online provider. People are likely to trust the BBC to help them understand new and emerging aspects of online digital media, as well as how to read the media and appreciate the practical processes that lie behind the development of media content."[vii] The BBC's priorities are to:

- Report on technological developments and help people through the digital media jargon used in the marketplace.
- Encourage audiences to adopt emerging technologies and services, and understand the media environment, including how content is made, presented and accessed.
- Encourage audiences to experiment creatively with digital media tools in order to contribute to the BBC's output and participate in wider society and engage within and across communities of interest.
- Provide advice to enable children to explore online content in safety.

In the Emerging Communications Public Purpose, The BBC Trust stated that "The BBC should work with other UK bodies to end the 'digital divide' between those who enjoy the benefits of digital technologies and those outside that group."[viii] In response, the BBC made a commitment to "promote understanding of new technologies by continuing to invest in media literacy in order to promote understanding of the benefits of new technologies, particularly among the most vulnerable audiences."[ix] Specifically, the BBC committed to:

- Work to support the media literacy of all of its audience.
- Aim to be a trusted guide to new technologies for audiences.
- Work with the wider industry to provide clear messages around benefits of emerging technologies.

Lottery Fund, E.ON, EE, Lloyds Banking Group, Post Office and TalkTalk. Go ON UK's vision is to make the UK the world's most digitally skilled nation

MEDIA LITERACY IN A MULTI-SCREEN WORLD

The term 'Media Literacy' can represent different things to different groups of people. In fact, a 2012 Media Literacy report commissioned by the BBC Trust showed that the public had "little or no familiarity with the phrase 'media literacy'" (2010:11) but the constituent elements of media literacy did have meaning and were of interest and concern.[x] The report also showed that there was a demand by the public "for much more active promotion of these efforts, both on and off-air."(2010:4)[xi]

As a term it is sometimes, unhelpfully, used interchangeably with Media Education, Media Studies, and Digital Literacy. While there are areas of overlap with all three of these categories, they are all discrete terms representing different genres of skills and understanding.

Prof. Maire Messenger Davies suggests that media literacy "now involves a shift from *receiving* – a process through which it was relatively easy to ensure universal access and positive societal goals such as informed citizenship – to *seeking*, where the onus is much more on the users to find out things for themselves." (2012:27)[xii]

Ofcom, the UK communications regulator has a statutory duty to promote media literacy under section 11 of the Communications Act 2003. Ofcom defines media literacy as the ability to use, understand and create media and communications, and point out that "in an online environment where the possibility for direct content regulation diminishes, the need for a media literate public increases."[xiii]

In their 2006 response to the DCMS' Creative Economy Consultation, the Media Literary Task Force[2] suggested that "Being, or becoming, media literate is a life-long journey of learning... it involves people having both technological and intellectual access to a wide range of diverse media and media content, as well as being confident enough to question and be creative with media and media content at work, in the home and in civil society."[xiv]

In the BBC's plan for delivering the Public Purposes, Media Literacy is loosely defined as the ability to "access, understand and create different types of media."[xv] This definition identifies three categories of skills that an individual might need to adopt, engage and benefit from, emerging communications technologies and services.

- **Access/Use:** This set of skills includes the basic skills required to get online and navigate around the internet effectively, finding and using the relevant content in an appropriate way. As Davies points out in her review of Media Literacy Research and Practice, the BBC's Emerging Communications Public Purpose refers to the importance of these skills when users are trying to navigate the sheer amount of information online. "For some audiences, particularly informal learners, navigating the sheer quantity of information available on demand will prove a challenge." (2012:5)[xvi]

  However, it is not just the sheer quantity of information available; it is also the number of ways the audience can now engage with our content. IP-enabled devices, Internet TV, Connected Red Button all represent new access points for our audiences with the potential to enrich the content and add value, but some sections of our audiences may require additional support and encouragement to engage with our content on new platforms.

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[2] *The Media Literacy Task Force was an informal group, set up by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, which helped to bring strategic cohesion to the development of media literacy. It created A Charter for Media Literacy. Founding members were the UK Film Council, Channel 4, BFI, BBC and Skillset.*

- **Understand:** These skills include the literacy and cognitive skills that underpin and enhance the 'access' skills and include being able to analyse content, identify who created it, why, who owns it and who can use it. This category also includes the skills required to assess the veracity and trustworthiness of content, the potential risks associated with it and whether those risks pose a personal, physical or technical threat.

  As described in the BBC Trust's report on Media Literacy these skills will help "audiences to engage critically with media – to find what they are looking for from trustworthy sources, to understand what it is about, to form an opinion about it and, where necessary, to respond to and interact with it" (2012:12). [xvii] The report also clearly shows that knowing how to interact safety with the media is the area of media literacy that was of most concern to people.

  Concerns around children's online safety are often linked to 'risks' associated with online content. Evidence from the EU Kids Online study suggests that "it is also important to develop strategies to build children's resilience and to provide resources which help children to cope with or recover from the effects of harm"(2012:5).[xviii] This research underlines the importance of developing 'understand' skills, as helping children and young people to develop emotional resilience may minimise the harm that some children experience from online risk.

  The BBC Trust also noted that "There is also the problem of finding material that is authoritative, trustworthy and accurate - a problem likely to grow as the amount of user generated content on the internet increases"(2007:5). [xix]

- **Create:** These skills build on the first two categories and include the creative and technical skills users need to be able to contribute to content as well as creating and distributing their own content online. The success of recent BBC projects such as '*Britain in a Day*' and the popularity of projects such as BBC Outreach and 'The Lab' demonstrates the appetite that our audience has for content creation and participation. The BBC Trust's 2012 report on Media Literacy shows that this activity is valued by our audience and would like even more support to help adults develop skills in this area.

As Livingstone and Wang point out in their 2013 Media Policy Brief, "citizens and consumers must rely on their digital skills as never before. Rapid transformations in the digital media landscape have put increasing pressure on individuals to navigate highly complex technologies, risking digital exclusion, consumer detriment, low participation and growing inequality"(2013:2).[xx]

A 2012 BBC research report into the behaviours, needs and drivers of the online audience suggests that some people won't even try new online tasks unless they feel completely able to do so.[xxi]

This BBC Media Literacy strategy represents an opportunity for the BBC to become the place where people can start to learn the skills and develop the confidence they need to get the best out of the new content and services including Connected TV, Connected Red Button and YouView.

In the words of psychologist Herbert Gerjuoy and quoted by Alvin Toffler, "Tomorrow's illiterate will not be the man who can't read; he will be the man who has not learned how to learn."[xxii]

FUTURE STRATEGIC APPROACH AND OBJECTIVES

In recent years, BBC Media Literacy policy has focussed on helping people to develop the 'access/use' skills, specifically getting people online for the first time. By working with partners to deliver our *First*

Click, *First Click Friends* and *Give an Hour* campaigns, we have helped to raise awareness of the benefits of being online and helped hundreds of thousands of people take their first tentative steps to getting online and developing the skills to fully engage in the digital world.

However, if our audiences are to function effectively in a converging digital space and fully benefit from BBC products, services and content - whether that's new iPlayer apps, YouView, Connected TV, The Digital Public Space or *Britain in a Day* - a shift in emphasis in BBC Media Literacy policy towards the 'understand' and 'create' skills, in addition to the 'use' skills, will be critical.

The BBC is well-positioned to become the premium provider of content to help people develop the media literacy skills *and* confidence needed to get the best out of new features and functionality such as integrated online and broadcast content.

To achieve this we have outlined 4 strategic priorities:

1. Work in partnership to provide clear messages around benefits of emerging technologies and building digital skills and confidence of those newly online or lacking confidence.

2. Help all of our audiences develop media literacy skills and confidence required to better understand the media environment, including how content is made, presented and accessed.

3. Help parents and children understand and manage the risks associated with online activity.

4. Encourage audiences to experiment creatively with digital media in order to contribute to the BBC's output and participate in wider society and engage within and across communities of interest.

These overarching objectives will be achieved through a combination of:

- long-term editorial work-streams

- a comprehensive online media literacy content strategy

- working in partnership with key internal and external partners

EDITORIAL WORK-STREAMS

To help BBC audiences develop the skills to fully engage with evolving content and technology, media literacy projects and editorial will be aligned to one of three work-streams. Each work-stream will be loosely based around one of the three media literacy skills categories (access/use, understand and create) and will, over time, address all skill levels but will prioritise the basic skills in the earlier stages.

By engaging with the BBC commissioning processes, opportunities can be identified for increasing the reach and impact of media literacy messages across a wide range of BBC brands.

WORK-STREAM 1: GET CONNECTED

The *Get Connected* work-stream is aligned to the 'Use' category of skills and will concentrate on helping our audiences use emerging technology to get online and get the most from the internet, and in particular from BBC content.

Today, audiences demand a relatively high degree of engagement and interaction with online propositions. In response, the industry is delivering online experiences that are more engaging, more personal and increasingly social.

This work-stream will cover a range of online skills; from the basic online skills required to access public services online, to more advanced experiences offered via Mobile, Tablets, TV and PC including social media, catch-up services, extended coverage and integrated broadcast and online content.

In line with our commitments to [Go ON UK](#), the BBC will deliver projects and online resources that partners can use to help their employees and customers develop basic online skills by 2015. In addition to developing basic online skills and confidence, this work-stream will also help the audience better understand how content is produced, owned and distributed.

WORK-STREAM 2: GET SMART

Aligned to the 'Understand' category of skills, the second work-stream, *Get Smart,* will focus on helping people develop the habits, behaviours and knowledge required for safe, appropriate and effective online engagement.

The 2012 EU Kids Online study suggests that online risks can be related to levels of online usage, and simply reducing risks by limiting levels of usage may also limit opportunities. The report recognises that while "measures to reduce specific risks have their place, it is also important to develop strategies to build children's resilience and to provide resources which help children to cope with or recover from the effects of harm" (2012:5). [xxiii]

This work-stream commenced in February 2012 with the *Share Take Care* project. As part of BBC's support for Safer Internet Day, this joint initiative between Radio 1, CBBC, BBC Learning and the UK Safer Internet Centre helped young people develop understanding and build resilience to online risks. This work-stream incorporates media literacy projects such as *News School Report*, *The Listening Project*, *Free Speech* and *The Lab* which help the audience develop a deeper understanding of how content is made, presented and accessed.

WORK-STREAM 3: GET CREATIVE

The third work-stream will focus on helping the audience develop the creative and technical skills required to fully participate, contribute and distribute content. Linked to the 'Create' category of media literacy skills, this work-stream will address all skill levels but is likely to feature more of the advanced skills. This work-stream will also contribute to meeting the BBC's responsibilities in relation to copyright awareness and education.

The popularity of the *Britain in a Day* project, combined with the BBC Digital Participation research[xxiv] which shows that 60% of the UK online population is now active online in some way - from sharing photos to starting a discussion - suggests that there is an appetite for projects of this nature. Similarly, projects such as *Fresh*, and *Connect and Create* will encourage the audience to experiment creatively with digital media.

ONLINE MEDIA LITERACY CONTENT STRATEGY

We will implement an online content strategy with a particular focus on developing the digital skills and confidence of people who are newly online and/or those lacking digital confidence. This will involve the creation, monitoring and maintenance of a comprehensive range of high quality, stackable media literacy resources integrated across BBC content and embedded across partner networks.

These resources will build the media literacy skills and confidence required by users to fully engage and enjoy the best of BBC content and technology. Designed to function both as a self-guided online learning journeys for individuals, or as part of a more formal learning programme facilitated by third parties, these resources will include interactive games and quizzes, infographics, videos, apps and podcasts. To help take BBC online content to where the hard-to-reach audiences are, these resources will be freely sharable and embeddable on third partner networks providing support to people developing digital skills.[xxv]

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

As a leader in the field of content development, audience engagement and audience reach, the BBC will work at both a strategic and a practical level with external and internal partners to make the BBC's online media literacy content a cornerstone of partners' delivery models.

As outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding between BBC and Go ON UK, the BBC media literacy strategy is aligned with, but independent of the Go ON UK strategy. As a founder member of Go ON UK, the BBC has made a series of partner commitments[xxvi] to help make the UK the most digitally literate nation in the world. In addition, by harnessing its marketing and editorial reach, the BBC will work with Go ON UK partners to provide clear messages around the benefits of emerging technologies and building digital skills.

This approach to media literacy also supports the BBC's broader Learning Strategy,[xxvii] the BBC Connected Strategy,[xxviii] our approach to partnerships[xxix] and unlocking the BBC archive. For example, possessing 'Understand' skills is critical for effective use of the Journal of Record which is an initiative aiming to create the definitive online archive collection of the BBC's television and radio journalism.

SUMMARY

Research indicates that a strategic shift in BBC Media Literacy policy from helping people 'to get online' to helping people 'develop online skills' is critical if we are to help our audience engage with, and benefit from, the full range of evolving BBC content and services.

To achieve this we will use a combination of long-term editorial work-streams, a comprehensive online content strategy and working in partnership with key internal and external partners.

This proposal represents a strategic change in focus and approach based on evidence and audience need. Specifically, this approach will:

- Address the growing digital needs of all our audience and users, irrespective of their skill level and help them develop the skills and confidence to get the very best from BBC content and emerging technology.
- Improve the audience's understanding and appreciation of BBC content by encouraging better assessment and analysis of content.
- Provide a cost effective way of creating, sharing and linking resources across the BBC and beyond.
- Help to meet the BBC's responsibilities in relation to copyright awareness and education.
- Engage with the traditionally hard-to-reach youth audience.
- Support the BBC Learning Strategy, the BBC Connected Strategy and the BBC Archive strategy. In particular, the development of more advanced digital skills are at the heart of BBC Future Media's 'Open to All' theme.
- Support the BBC Partnership Strategy by addressing our commitments to Go ON UK and their aim of making the UK the most digitally literate nation in the world.
- Ensuring the BBC's contribution to Online Child Safety is recognised through our standards on bbc.co.uk; our work with UKCCIS; our on-air campaigns and projects in support of Safer Internet Day; and, our responses to recommendations in the Bailey Review.

In conclusion, this proposal offers an opportunity for pan-BBC collaboration and coordination, ensuring a significantly more joined-up approach to addressing our Media Literacy responsibilities and achieving results that equal more than the sum of our individual parts.

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