

The Promises, Challenges, and Futures of Media Literacy | Data & Society

By Monica Bulger and Patrick Davison

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Contemporary media literacy programs—commonly organized around the five main themes of youth participation, teacher training and curricular resources, parental support, policy initiatives, and evidence base construction—have demonstrated positive outcomes, particularly in the case of rapid responses to breaking news events, connecting critical thinking with behavior change, and evaluating partisan content. However, media literacy efforts continue to struggle with a lack of comprehensive evaluation data, with some research showing programs can have little-to-no impact for certain materials, or even lead to harmful overconfidence in assessing media content.

Report authors Monica Bulger and Patrick Davison make five recommendations to guide the future of media literacy programming for educators, legislators, technologists, and philanthropists in the space. Specifically, they warn against the treatment of media literacy as a panacea—particularly at a time when significant resources continue to be pushed toward media literacy programs as a counter balance to “fake news.”

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