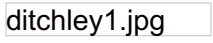


Media Literacy: it's more than media studies or training, it's democracy

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One of the key messages for me that came out of the [Ditchley conference](#) on media and democracy was the importance of an enhanced understanding of media literacy. This is more than just understanding how the media works, or understanding how to create some journalism yourself. It is about developing a creative and critical knowledge about how media (especially new media) plays a part in democracy and civil society. 

This was just one part of the report by the conference Chairman Jeremy Greenstock (who used to be HMG's man at the UN amongst other things). Read his report [here](#) on [Adrian Monck's](#) blog where he also has links to reports by [Jeff Jarvis](#) and [Richard Sambrook](#). This is what Sir Jeremy had to say about media literacy on our behalf:

"The themes of quality and "media literacy" came into our discussion, suggesting that government, the private sector and individual members of society alike ought to take more trouble to understand the context of modern trends and set in hand or support policies which built a more responsible society....

We interpreted "media literacy" as meaning not so much the literary quality of journalism itself as the capacity of the public to receive the media's product with discernment and to judge what was healthy for their own interests beyond the short term. It was felt that there was a need to insert a stronger sense of civic responsibility into the education curriculum

Throughout the conference participants constantly returned to the need for young people, and perhaps older generations as well, to understand better the modern context for a healthy democracy.

With communications technology racing ahead as it was, public participation in the media was the only modern guarantor of a healthy media sector and the exercising of public judgement by a "literate" society was a necessary requirement for securely-based democracy. Not just schools and universities, but also business management training and government accountability processes, should build in an approach that served these needs."

Also, read this excellent piece on media literacy by [Susan Moeller](#):

"The fundamental reason why media literacy matters? Without public education, via such a channel as Media Literacy teaching, there will be no pressure and there will be only a minimal audience for quality news on any platform. And without public education, there will be only a limited understanding that threats to journalists and media institutions are, in effect, threats to the body politic and open societies. As Collier and others have learned, independent media bring transparency and accountability to both government and the corporate sector."

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