# Howard Rheingold's Five Media Literacies

Jay Crook – May 2012 – ETEC 5310

Howard Rheingold defined the five social media literacies necessary to be empowered in digital skills and in information literacies (Rheingold, 2010). When examining his interconnected literacies, it becomes obvious that these are steps of progression. To apply these to Web 2.0 tools, it may be necessary to add a preliminary step which is a duplication of his last step, Critical Consumption. The instructor, and later the student, must analyze each tool and evaluate its credentials. One might argue that this is part of Attention, but Rheingold defines Attention as being in the learning environment. This preliminary step would precede the entrance into the tool.
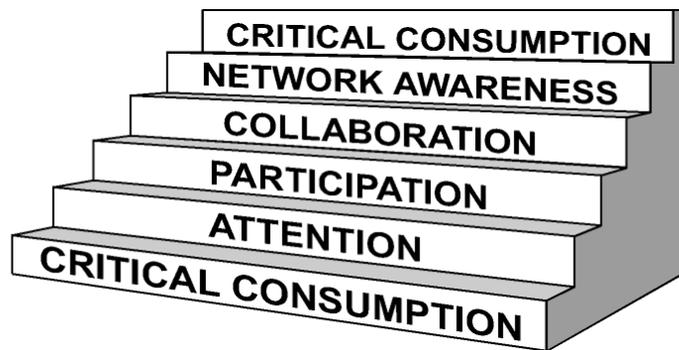

As we continue to examine Rheingold's literacies, we see how the steps build on each other and in doing so a flow structure is established. He said the most important fluency is in putting all five of the literacies together. "Young citizens are both self-guided and in need of guidance" (Rheingold, 2008).

1. Attention

Attention can be gained by understanding how people think. It is difficult to focus attention since our mind tends to wander in a random manner. If a tool does not hold the student's attention, will he continue to use it, or be interested in exploring its possibilities?

2. Participation

Participation is achieved when the student interacts with the tool. (Interacting with others is Collaboration.) Participating gives a student a different sense of being, being productive, and becoming "an active citizen rather than simply a passive consumer" (Rheingold, 2010). Students can move from a private to a public voice, from self-expression into a form of public participation (Rheingold, 2008).
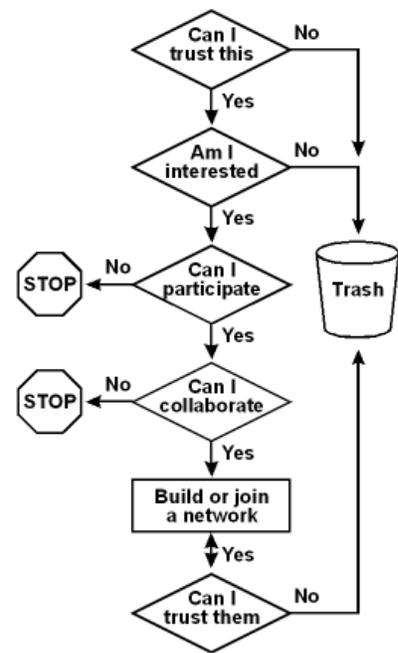
3. Collaboration

By collaborating or working together, people can get more things accomplished and gain more power than by working alone. Through collaboration, redundancies can be eliminated and labor and be distributed. Tools allowing collaboration allow students to share resources and work as a team, or build on each other's ideas.

4. Network Awareness

Social networks are now expanded with technology. New tools provide global interaction. Students can become members of newsgroups, virtual communities, gossip sites, forums and other organizations. "The technical networks amplify and extend the fundamental human capability of forming social networks" (Rheingold, 2010). Rheingold claims people become connected in a virtual community by a single idea (Watts, 2003).

5. Critical Consumption

Critical consumption is evaluating what and who is trustworthy. Before believing what others have written, communicating with them, or using a tool, it is wise to do some detective work. Check the claims, the author's background, sources and accuracy. During an interview, Rheingold said the secret is "learning to recognize what to pluck from the flow right now because it is valuable enough to pay attention to now, what to open in a new tab for later today, what to bookmark and get out of my way, and what to pass over with no more than a glance are all aspects of attention literacy that effective use of Twitter requires" (Ishizuka, 2010).

Rheingold said technology has given us freedom and power but in doing so, has alienated us from the people we live with in our neighborhoods (Watts, 2003). He also said:

> "[Technology] doesn't seem pleasant to me or exciting as it used to be. It has homogenized the world in a way that makes me sad. The world is not as diverse, interesting, or complex...
>
> What is the appropriate use of tools? You have to ground that question in what is an appropriate way for people to spend their time...
>
> In fact, virtual communities are one of the things you can use these computers for, but you can't sell it as a substitute for participation in a family, taking part in voting in an election, or living in your apartment." (Watts, 2003).

References

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Rheingold vs. Web 2.0

A few SeKEs (Shared Knowledge Experiences) of significant Web 2.0 tools or technologies will be measured by Rheingold's five social media literacies to see how his theories align with actual technologies.

SeKE	Attention	Participation	Collaboration	Network Awareness	Critical Consumption
3. Drawing / Mapping	Some of the web 2.0 sites engage the user immediately	Drawing, photo manipulation, cartooning, animation	Draw with friends using Scriblink	Many sites allow you to share your art work with others.	Some sites are addictive.
4. Collaborative Docs	Fun to see others edit as you do.	Sharing docs with others	That's the whole point!	Helps virtual teams to bridge the distance.	Many sites provide tracking to see who made the changes.
5. Mobile Learning iPad	Small, slender yet very powerful	Wide variety of apps with simple functions	Many collaboration sites include apps (i.e. Facebook and Skype)	Meet other people with similar devises. Recommend apps.	Credibility with the App Store
6. Mobile Learning-Droids	PC production down due to popularity of mobile devices	Take it with you along with wallet and keys	Too much. Texting while driving? Sharing earbuds while listening to songs.	AT&T, Verizon, etc. Logging locations.	Competition with iPhone. Screening calls.
7. Podcasting	Alternative to reading.	Walking audio tour of museums.	Creating podcasts as a group project.	Latest song from a band to fans.	Evaluate the truthfulness of the recording.
9. Classroom Tools	Alternative to lecture.	Trying various programs.	Group projects. Presentations.	Involvement with classmates.	Does it work? Is it true?

10. Web Page	Learning can reach more people in more places.	Anyone can create a web page without any programming knowledge.	Sites like Weebly allow multiple developers work on a web site at once.	Care is required to not overwrite others' work.	It is easy to make junk or quality.
13. Digital Storytelling	Narrative more interesting than lecture.	Active listening.	Developing a story with a group.	Can be used to solicit involvement.	Truth or fiction?
17. Work Group / Team Collaboration	May need incentives.	Using sharing sites for documents.	Sharing and editing documents.	Seeing others work at the same time.	Tracking changes made by others.
18. Screen Sharing	Watch presentations LIVE!	Chat, raise hand, talking over connection	Share presenter access	Brings groups together as if they are in one location	Allows for arguing with others and showing proof
Final Project	Colorful Weebly template	Watching videos. Online quiz.	Use Skype to interview a client.	Build a relationship with a client and learn to communicate about design.	Select a typography program that is best for them.