

# Final Exam Questions New Mass Media

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**1. New mass media are predominantly digital, which is a blessing and a curse at the same time. Please explain what are the main benefits of digital media and what also are the biggest threats/risks associated with them.**

The digital, distributed nature of new mass media is probably its biggest strength and weakness at the same time. Many online services are free to use if one has an internet connection and a device that can access the web. This makes internet use very easy and cheap, allowing many people to participate. Additionally, the internet is available in most areas worldwide, allowing communication and the global sharing of ideas. Such new mass media can reach more people than ever before, contributing to a global exchange of ideas. Furthermore, ideas can spread very easily across the internet because most platforms are interconnected. This allows a funny tweet to not only become popular on Twitter, but also on Facebook, Instagram or Reddit. Another advantage of new mass media is that traditional gatekeepers (in old forms of media like TV, radio, newspapers) do not exist on the internet. This allows people to publish what they want.

This easy spreading of ideas and absence of gatekeepers has downsides, too. Because ideas spread so easily, factually incorrect ones or harmful ones spread easily, too. In combination with the absence of gatekeepers moderating content, this can and does lead to falsehoods being shared. These falsehoods, if they are subtle, will spread before being noticed and do considerable damage. This disadvantage ties into another one, that verifying the truthfulness of online content is difficult and (I would bet) most people do not do that. Finding the original source of a statement can take time and is difficult because even reputable news agencies cite other news agencies citing other news agencies etc. If even they are hard to fact-check, the average Facebook user is impossible to fact-check without putting more effort than most people would be willing to.

**3. What is media literacy and why it is a vital skill nowadays? Please discuss at least 3 cases in which it needs to be applied and why.**

According to Wikipedia, “Media literacy encompasses the practices that allow people to access, critically evaluate, and create or manipulate media.” (1. [Wikipedia - Media literacy](#)). Part of this is the process of identifying the author, purpose, intended audience, point of view, and representation (bias, propaganda, censorship) of a piece of content (2. [Wikipedia - Media literacy education](#)). Media literacy is essential for understanding any content. Content is created with a purpose and a consumer must realize what that purpose is. Often, this purpose is to convince of something; being aware of this makes it harder to be manipulated. Additionally, understanding how content is created and manipulated allows participation in media and gives a deeper understanding of how it is done.

1. A friend shares a post on social media about a building project that is plagued by issues. It is important to ask who wrote the post – a respected journalist or a jealous competitor? Was the intended audience the readers of a newspaper or was it a press

statement? Is the post written in a neutral way or is it emotional? These factors differentiate between a building progress description by a respected journalist and a smear campaign by a local competitor against another company.

2. Reading a news article on a controversial topic like gene editing, applying media literacy is extremely important. Was the article written by an advocacy group or by outside observers? Is the article arguing about gene editing or is it trying to inform? Was it written for a general audience or for other scientists? Is the writing biased towards a standpoint and is this acknowledged? These questions can reveal if the article is a hit piece against gene editing or if it is a neutral report by experts in the field trying to inform the public.
3. Media literacy is important when content relates to politics, like election advertisements. Here, the author or group that commissioned the ad is (generally) easy to identify because regulations dictate it. But it is very important to ask what the purpose of the ad is. Are they trying to inform voters of their policies or trying to fearmonger and make their opponents look bad? What is the political affiliation of the advertiser and what interests do they have in the election? Here media literacy can help distinguish a charged emotional appeal that misrepresents facts from a simple statement of facts that aims to inform the viewer about what a certain party plans to do if they win the election.

### *References*

1. Wikipedia - Media literacy: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media\\_literacy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media_literacy)
2. Wikipedia - Media literacy education:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media\\_literacy#Media\\_literacy\\_education](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media_literacy#Media_literacy_education)