

# Introduction

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Digital production across a wide range of sites is no longer a new phenomenon within the field of youth, technology and media cultures. Nearly two decades ago *Jenny Grahame*, *David Buckingham* and *Julian Sefton-Green* explored cultures of digital production in the book *Making Media: Practical Production in Media Education* (1995). This seminal, empirical work contributed new knowledge about young people's engagement with cultural production in schools. However, few people have paid attention to how early this contribution was in regard to cultural production with digital tools. During the last two decades three fields of study have emerged. Studies in school, which primarily relate to media education (Buckingham, 2003; Burn, 2009; Burn & Durran, 2007; Goodman, 2003), studies of young people's production practices in non-formal contexts such as after-school programmes (Drotner, 1995; Ito et al., 2010; Kafai & Pepler, 2011; Lundby, 2008; Maira & Soep, 2005) and geek production fuelled by a new generation of *Pro-Ams* (Leadbeater & Miller, 2004), or semi-professionals, who want to make their way into the creative industries (Barron, 2010; Gilje, 2013; Ito, 2009; Mathieu, 2012).

This special issue on *Cultures of Digital Production and Moving Images* aims to provide a slightly different perspective on these cultures of production by primarily looking at film festivals and cultures of moving image production in Norway as well as other countries. The origin of this special issue arose from a particular event, namely the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Amandus*, a Norwegian film contest and festival for young filmmakers, in 2012. It is one of the oldest – if not the oldest – continuous film festivals in the world for this target group, and in the film contributions to this festival we had an unique, important and almost untapped source for how young people have been using moving images to express themselves from about the time that filmmaking in practice became an option for young learners with the introduction of video cameras in the mid-1980s (Buckingham & Willett, 2009). Examining the films submitted to the festival, we raised questions related to media literacy and digital literacy. These ranged from how the festival has been adapted for – and has encouraged – young people to become filmmakers within certain genres, to the importance of the opportunities for screening and publicity, obtaining constructive feedback and judgements, networking with peers, participating in educating seminars and so on. The festival itself could also be regarded as a result of policy incentives and years of effort being devoted to media education. Using such perspectives, the *Amandus* festival could serve as a depot for an extended understanding of media literacy in its

widest sense – as a tool for democratization and for empowering young people. The essays in this special issue frame engagement in cultures of digital and analogue production over three decades. In this way we provide a time span where cultures of moving images have undergone radical changes in regard to technology. This development has implications well beyond accessibility and the changing practices of production.

The majority of contributions in this special issue are from Norway, a sign of the increasing importance of digital technologies in this context, spurred on by the government's policy initiative (Erstad, 2010; Sefton-Green, Nixon & Erstad, 2009). In the first article, co-authored by *Moseng* and *Vibeto*, we can follow aesthetically and thematically the developments in 300 films made by youngsters during the 25 year history of the Amandus film festival (1988-2012). The authors point to how access to digital technologies has simplified interaction, mastering and playing with cinematic and storytelling norms. While imitating the aesthetic of commercial movies, the Amandus films also appropriate the subject matter and moral standards of professional media contents that represent them (e.g. Norwegian teen-pics). The authors conclude that while the aesthetic quality leap has been notable throughout the three decades thanks to the growth of digital literacy, the storytelling qualities have not gone through the same development. The article calls for more ethnographical oriented research, including looking at whether young Norwegians are more prudent and socially and politically committed than their parents.

The second article by *Haugsbakk* and *Fritze* elaborates on these issues by framing how young people portray themselves in today's hyper complex society (Qvortrup, 2001). By looking at a number of short films after the turn of the century, the authors provide reflective thoughts on the ways in which young people are increasingly expressing themselves with a voice of their own as an outcome of digital literacy practices. In doing this, they extensively describe important aspects of today's problems in society by recognizing their own observations through the medium of film. Consequently, their films become reflexive outcomes of digital production practices – mirroring their contemporaries.

Moving the scene to London and a youth filmmaking project for young British Muslims, *Blum-Ross* demonstrates how project funders and organizers proposed a different version of citizenship to that privileged by the young participants. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork the author explicates how these different understandings of citizenship are marshalled and contested within youth filmmaking. In doing this, she shows how young people may use digital media to explore notions of citizenship, but that this is a contextual possibility of the technology, not an inevitable one. By using their experience of making films to create informed critiques, supported by the adult facilitators, the young Muslims in this project did not necessarily match up with the aims of the project itself. Ultimately, the research study provides ample evidence for making the case that digital media – and digital literacy - can help foster aspects of active citizenship, but the forms of citizenship that the young people prioritize might be different to those initially intended.

The last of the four peer-reviewed articles contests notions of digital literacy by contrasting a top-down perspective, found in policy documents, with a bottom-up perspective on digital production of moving images across contexts. In doing so, *Svoen* and *Gilje* place emphasis on how policy making is related to technological development and young people's production practices in various contexts over time. By discussing media literacy in relation to digital literacy, the authors look at the interplay between various incentives from the authorities, young people's interest in filmmaking and available

resources and contexts over time. Consequently, the article calls for a greater understanding of digital literacy and young people's production practices than is usually given in the literature.

In addition to these research studies, we also provide two reports on filmmaking across the world. From South America, two stakeholders in the Rio De Janeiro International Film Festival present the Generation Program, a segment for children and teenagers. In this program, 25 workshops addressed diverse emerging cultures of production with digital tools. Among other things, *Krumholz* and *Gonzales* report on a workshop using cell phones for short movies, discovering possibilities and pitfalls using this technology in non-formal settings. The final contribution imparts a large European Study on film education and film literacy from 2012. *Burn* and *Reid* provide a definition of film literacy that also emphasizes the importance of understanding the language of moving images, and how to handle this language in creative filmmaking together with technical resources. By categorizing their findings by means of the questions “why”, “what”, “who” and “where”, the authors reflect on models of film education in Europe.

The majority of educational research on digital literacy has focused on conceptual understanding of digital literacy in policy discourses or digital competence in formal educational contexts where learning and meaning-making take place using a wide range of digital tools. This special issue contributes a slightly different account by looking at cultures of production across a time of transition from analogue to digital production cultures. Taken together this special issue of NJDL seeks to cross the boundaries between cultures of digital production and notions of media literacy and digital literacy. In doing so, we pay more attention to issues related to what is actually made and the contexts and premises that have come into existence, rather than the (digital) tools used. Consequently, we agree with previous contributions to this journal, aimed at expanding the field of ICT in education, which have been constrained by the *tool* metaphor for far too long. As editors as well as contributors to this special issue of NJDL, we argue for a broader approach to digital literacy by giving more prominence to production cultures and meaning-making in creative processes over time and in a variety of contexts.

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