

ELIZABETH We were talking about like, what is digital media literacy exactly, because we talked about this
CHOE: a lot. And I think what it really is, is not so much being proficient in scripting and filming and editing, it's just the self awareness to know what you're good at, and what you're not good at. And just the appreciation for what goes into things, and the knowledge of who to tap into to help you create a project or help you communicate something. Go ahead.

JOSHUA GUNN: I just have a question because I'm not plugged into the MIT community, or even into the scientific community, for that matter. But is there a culture of sort of individuality wherein this notion that basically, my intellectual work is to be done sort of in a silo, versus the kind of, like, I know I'm not good at this, so I need to build a team where we can build.

GEORGE ZAIDAN: At MIT, it's pretty interdisciplinary. What I would say, is not siloed, but there's an ingrained culture of is this idea that real science-- and I'm doing it now by saying real science-- that science and engineering is work, and communication is not work.

JOSHUA GUNN: Oh, I see.

ELIZABETH Or even that it a separate thing.

CHOE:

JOSHUA GUNN: Yeah.

GEORGE ZAIDAN: Yeah.

CHRIS BOEBEL That's a pretty good way of putting it.

GEORGE ZAIDAN: So that's-- it's not that people are like siloed within themselves, it's that communicators don't have street cred with scientists, period.

CHRIS BOEBEL: And that part will just happen, it will take care of itself. I'm not going to worry about it too much.

JOSHUA GUNN: I see, so that sounds like the real meat of what you guys are trying to work on, in a way.

ELIZABETH Yeah, I guess. I mean it's interesting because I gave a survey to the students at the end of the
CHOE: class, and they were all like, I probably wouldn't make another video again. A couple of them said they would, but most of them are like, I probably won't make a video, but, I have so much more appreciation for what goes into it.

Now I can't watch a movie without thinking about how much, you know, how much work it took to just light the scene. So even just having the appreciation for what goes into it, I think, is a big step. But, again, with the whole literacy thing, just the awareness of how important these skills are.

Because, like you said, I mean, it's just crazy that we think of them as separate things. There's science and there's communication, and you're trained separately on these things, if you happen to be a science communicator.

CHRIS BOEBEL: One of things that I think is really interesting about media is that video or media, films, they're really interesting in that when they're well made, they're so accessible. They're so immediately graspable by those of us in the last 100 years who's really literate at unpacking video and understanding the medium.

They're so kind of intuitively open that people who don't have any appreciation or awareness of how they're made assume that there isn't any kind of effort behind them. That they just kind of happen. And I can remember as a kid kind of thinking that. Never really thinking about movies and how they were made until, I was probably, God, in college. I just kind of assumed that they just kind of happened out there.

JOSHUA GUNN: Our clients think you just hit a button.

CHRIS BOEBEL: Exactly. Yeah, exactly. And that's because if things are well made, it's like, didn't that just always exist that way? You mean somebody actually had to create that? It seems so natural. And I think that one of the things, a key of media literacy, is breaking that myth.

JOSHUA GUNN: Right. Or, gasp, it would cost money to hire people.

GEORGE ZAIDAN: And take time.

JOSHUA GUNN: You would have to hire professionals to do it that are trained and pay them.

**ELIZABETH
CHOE:** So the biggest thing in teaching this literacy, though, I think, is making them go through the experience themselves. Because it's one thing if you watch like a series of lectures. Like it's one thing if you watch this on OpenCourseWare, and you can take the notes on, like, this is good framing if you use the thirds rule.

Write a script like you would say it. We go through all these sort of tangible, take home points.

These sort of plastic elements, like you mentioned. But I don't think you'll have the same, you won't draw the same value from it as if you actually go through and try to do the projects that these students did.

And that's a big issue, I think, especially in media teaching. That it's easy to first establish a sort of theoretical principles. Like, this is sort of what makes a good story. And then it's another thing to actually give hard, tangible examples to students. Like, look at this script.

They're able to point out issues in the scripts. They were able to critique them, but then it's a whole other step for them to be able to integrate it themselves into a script. So you'd have a student who understood the principles, they took the notes, they could reiterate everything you said to them. They were able to look at the examples you gave them and say, oh you know, this is unclear here, this is awkward wording.

And then they would write the script, and you'd be like, there's this disconnect to the third step. And it wasn't until they tried it, and then we were able to critique them directly that they were able to come to this final self awareness conclusion.