

# Digital and Media Education

Perspectives from Academic Research  
and Professional Practice

**CRISTINA NISTOR and RAREȘ BEURAN**  
Editors



PRESA UNIVERSITARĂ CLUJEANĂ

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and Professional Practice

Edited by

**Cristina Nistor and Rareş Beuran**

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# Foreword

*Renee Hobbs and Yonty Friesem*

In October 2023, we came to the campus of Babeş-Bolyai University for the International Conference on Digital and Media Education, organized by Cristina Nistor and Rareş Beuran, who imagined the transformative possibilities of gathering media educators who stand at a unique geopolitical and intellectual crossroads. Here, on the eastern edge of the European Union, our discussions of demagogues, disinformation, and digital citizenship felt timely and important. Through dialogue and discussion, we were mapping a survival guide for democracy in a digital age.

This volume, *Digital and Media Education: Perspectives from Academic Research and Professional Practice*, is the vital artifact of that work. In this book, you'll see how researchers and educators move from teaching about media industry practices and systems to the practice of media literacy as a daily civic act. This shift represents a bold step away from inoculation models which treat media texts, platforms, and institutions as a virus to be resisted. Instead, in these pages, you will find a robust, future-facing pedagogy of personal and social empowerment.

The Romanian context offers a powerful lens through which to view this important time in history. Standing as a bulwark of European democratic values, yet intimately familiar with the pressures of polarization and the "business of conspiracy theories," Romanian educators, media professionals, and researchers are uniquely positioned to ensure that education is responsive to current realities. They know that to defend against the erosion of truth, a citizenry must be capable of intellectual self-defense. Learners of all ages need to interrogate the algorithmic architectures that monetize outrage and understand the economic engines that drive disinformation.

But critical thinking without caring cannot transform education or society. This is where the holistic vision of this volume shines. It bridges the critical with the compassionate. As the chapters within this book illuminate, the emotional dimensions of our digital lives help us navigate world rife with conflict and exclusion. When we are prepared to acknowledge our feelings (of exhaustion, exhilaration, enticement or something else) and apply them to the practice of media education, it helps us to see the humanity in media texts, platforms, and technologies. By teaching students to recognize the human being behind the screens in our lives, we help them listen across divides and to manage their own emotional

responses to toxic content. This has the potential to make media education a profound form of peace-building.

Cristina Nistor and Rareș Beuran demonstrate that an effective way to internalize the competencies of media education is through the philosophy of "create to learn." When learners are not just consumers but creators, they gain a sense of agency in producing their own podcasts, videos, and digital campaigns. They learn the social responsibilities of persuasion, discovering its potential to heal, inform, and connect rather than divide. Indeed, the fine essays in this volume help to build a bridge between "the sharp mind and the soft heart."

As you engage with the research and professional insights in these pages, we invite you to consider it a call to action. Whether you are a teacher in a Bucharest classroom, a policymaker in Brussels, or a researcher in the U.S., the strategies outlined here are tools for construction. As we work together to build the infrastructure of a resilient global community of learners, we are deeply grateful to the editors for capturing the spirit of that transformative week in Cluj-Napoca and expanding it into a resource for the world. Let this book serve as a reminder that in the face of algorithmic polarization and digital isolation, our greatest technology remains our shared humanity, as we are educated and empowered to seek the truth.

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