

Developing Child, Developing Media

... continued from page 12

hours. A good toy allows children to direct, act, produce and prepare the props for their own imaginative creation. Repetitive use of program-associated toys is not real play but mere imitation.

Children see real violence in the media which also introduces them to entertainment violence. They become confused between fantasy and reality. Play therapists have found that children who experience violence in their own lives seek entertainment violence and violent toys as protection and a way of understanding the violence committed against them.

A television viewing syndrome, PTVT (Post TV Trauma), sees children respond angrily when the television is turned off, said Professor Levin. Parents need to develop strategies to encourage children who suffer this syndrome into play of other kinds. Non-violent play can be encouraged and developed just as violent toys and programs encourage aggressive play.

Her message was that parents and educators have to help children be informed media consumers. They need to explain clearly what can and cannot be watched and played with, and why this is so. This communication and shared knowledge will empower the carer and the child.

Bruce Shearer

Children, the new media sophisticates

... continued from page 13

1.7 million children aged 5-17 years who frequently used a computer. This was half (51%) of the children in their age group. The computer was used by roughly one-fifth of the children aged 10-17 years for Internet based activities with Internet use increasing slightly as children grew older. At 5-9 years old, there were only 4% of computer users accessing the Internet.

Extrapolating from patterns in earlier research, one might be able to guess what children are doing with the Internet. They are likely to be using it for interactive and social purposes. Chat sessions online and sitting in groups of two or three, to offer advice to the person with the mouse, is likely to be their preferred interaction. They will be noisy, not concentrated. They will laugh and eat and offer advice. They might not do it for long, and if the house rules allow it, they'll play music and do other things at the same time. When children are using the Internet for schoolwork, they might have parents with them sometimes for advice, or more likely, to encourage their progress.

This article is an edited version of Patricia Gillard's address to the Australian Broadcasting Authority's "Children's Television Policy Forum", a one-day seminar held in Sydney on July 22, 1999

From The Archives

Pay TV latest

DBS appears to be dead as a delivery option for pay television. The remaining options have narrowed down to a cable only system, or a combination of indirect broadcast satellite with cable or MDS delivering the service to subscribers.

This is the trend emerging from questions put to key submitters - Department of Transport and Communications (DOTAC), FACTS, Hoyts and the CLC - by the Saunderson Committee during its third and latest round of hearings on pay television.

Hoyts, which made a late and substantial submission to the Committee, is the only major potential pay TV provider to have come forward in this inquiry. That others have not come forward is most likely due to the amount of time and money they expended on the Tribunal's 1984 SPS inquiry, only to have a more or less indefinite postponement. This time the industry is taking a wait-and-see approach. Hoyts is pitching for DBS

delivery of a Home Box Office-type service, with no regulation.

DOTAC did not make a written reply to Saunderson's list of questions but instead gave lengthy evidence in response to Committee. Many of the Committee's questions were critical of the Department's submission, including its use of the "publishing" and "broadcasting" models. Judging by the review of broadcasting regulation the Department may have modified its approach on regulation although it did not publicly resile from its deregulatory approach for pay TV.

DOTAC strongly advised against repeating the British experience with DBS which suggests that the chances of its succeeding here among a much smaller population are extremely dubious.

Two consultant economists appeared for FACTS and read at considerable length from prepared papers on the likely economic impact of pay TV, a tactic which some felt amounted to a filibuster. One of these papers revealed that the commercial networks' debt

burden was considerably greater (more than three times greater) than the figure given to the ABT, an inconsistency which Chairman Saunderson was quick to question.

Insofar as trends in the Committee's thinking could be divined from the hearings, it would seem that - in line with its earlier recommendations on the ABT - it is in favour of a rationalisation of the Broadcasting Act. It clearly does not wish the development of pay TV to be characterised by the adhoc approach that has been a feature of other broadcasting developments in Australia.

It would favour having policy objectives included in the Act rather than being enunciated separately for each new element in the system.

It remains equivocal on Australian content regulation for pay TV, mindful of the relatively disastrous Canadian experience resulting from high initial content levels for cable.

Communications Update, August 1989