Global Summit Report

ACCM President attended the Children's Global Media Summit (CGMS) 2017 which was held in Manchester, UK from 5-7 December, hosted by the BBC. This is her report.

The CGMS was organised around the themes of innovation, empowerment, freedom, entertainment and education. Each of the sessions was billed as relating to one of these positives, and preceded by a brief video featuring children's voices on a range of issues relating to media use and the world they are facing.

The speakers list was dominated by industry representatives, including Malik Ducard from YouTube, Jeffrey D Dunn and Stephen Youngwood from the Sesame Workshop, Rick Glankler from the Fremantle Media Group, Tracey Keenan from World Wrestling Entertainment, David Levine and Tricia Wilber from the Walt Disney Company, Simon Milner from Facebook and Lucy Murphy from Sky. There were also a number representing the not-for-profit sector, for example Josh Golin from the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood (USA), Isabella Henriques from the Alana Institute (Brazil), Baroness Beeban Kidron from 5Rights (UK), Vicki Shotbolt from ParentZone (UK) and Jim Steyer from Common Sense Media (USA). The programme was rounded out with a range of academics, politicians, government officials and entertainers. Oh, and one prince!

Sessions featuring these speakers were held separately from the ‘research stream’ which covered matters as ‘Thriving Online’ (freedom panel) and ‘Cashing in on the Kids’ (entertainment panel).

Australian presenters included Michelle Guthrie from the ABC, and Susan McLean from CyberSafety Solutions.

The most exciting thing I learnt was about the report Digital Childhood – Addressing Childhood Development Milestones in the Digital Environment, recently produced by 5Rights (mentioned above). The report aligns perfectly with ACCM’s long-standing approach of using child development as a yardstick for the benefits of media use; it points out that the digital environment was designed without children in mind and therefore treats them equally to others when in fact they have special needs. I hope that we can use the report to get more traction on these ideas here in Australia.

Digital Childhood

As reported in the previous article, this report was launched at the CGMS. Co-authors are Baroness Beeban Kidron, founder of 5Rights, and Dr. Angharad Rudkin, child clinical psychologist at University of Southampton.

The report considers how growing up in the digital environment directly impacts on a child’s development trajectory. It concludes that a managed route from infancy to adulthood is as important in the digital environment as it is in the analogue world.

Research on child development has been used to inform education, policy and parenting practices for at least a generation. However, most child development research predates the digital age since digital technology is only 25 years old, and has only been ubiquitously in the hands of children over the last five years. With digital development occurring at a quicker pace than research, it is difficult to get an accurate picture of the impact.

The authors suggest that more longitudinal and detailed cross-sectional research is urgently required so that children can be helped to maintain their wellbeing in a digital world and can become empowered digital citizens.

They say that current research needs to broaden from an agenda of adult-identified harms to one that captures all the

Tots and Tech: challenges for early childhood in a digital age

Friday 18 May, 2018, 9am-4:30pm
Hedley Beare Centre
51 Fremantle Drive, Stirling ACT

MORE INFORMATION
childrenandmedia.org.au/events/accm-seminars

Continued on P 4.............
Is children’s TV really like brussels sprouts?

Our guest editorial this month is written by the CEO of the Australian Children’s Television Foundation, Jenny Buckland. It is a response to what Bridget Fair, incoming head of the commercial television lobby group Free TV, wrote in The Australian Media section on 22 January, saying that that C (children’s) and P (preschool) programming had become the brussels sprout of commercial television - kids refused to eat them and therefore the quotas should be scrapped.

Jenny Buckland responds:

In The Australian on Monday, Bridget Fair, of Free TV Australia, opened up about her difficulties getting children to eat their brussel sprouts. For that problem, I recommend this: don’t cook them. Slice raw brussel sprouts very thinly, toss with grated carrot and finely sliced celery, toasted pepitas and a honey-mustard dressing. It’s crunchy. My kids love it. But if you try and cook them the old fashioned way, well, the audience gets bored and moves on to something else.

The rest of the piece was about kids TV, which the commercial broadcasters are having trouble getting kids to watch.

The networks are being comprehensively trounced by the ABC, and want the regulations obliging them to screen minimum levels of children’s content scrapped.

This suggests it could be time to serve Australian children’s screen content a new way, too.

The ABC has built successful destinations for children’s content, and it might be instructive to consider how they’ve done that. Their destinations are clearly branded and targeted for children. They market and promote both their children’s destinations and the programs. They surround regular, tent pole programs (like Playschool and Behind The News) with high quality commissions like Little Lunch, Mustangs FC, Dance Academy, Nowhere Boys, The Flamin’ Thongs and Dirt Girl World. These are distinctively Australian shows with high production values that parents are actually happy to watch with their kids. The ABC launches new children’s shows with pride and fan fair. Finally, as they’ve invested so much in high quality content they make sure they get their money’s worth by showing that content many times over on their digital channels and on iview, so that it builds a profile and today’s kids can find them and enjoy them when and where it suits them.

A vibrant, balanced, outstanding children’s content production environment, delivering quality Australian content to Australian children, requires competition for the audience and multiple players making a contribution. That’s why it would not serve the best interests of children just to let the commercial players off the hook and leave it to the ABC.

Television is the great story telling medium of our age. And wonderful television is now coming from every corner of the globe. It’s a crowded market. And kids get exposed to it all. They also get exposed to plenty of family and adult reality TV formats and all sorts of other stuff that they enjoy watching. But that’s not an excuse, not to provide some space for shows that are just for them. That look at the world from a child’s point of view.

We need to keep up, though. The current children’s television regulations were developed 30 years ago. They require 260 hours a year of C content (for school aged children) and 130 hours a year of P content (for primary school aged children). Those figures were arrived at on the basis of an hour of kids tv per day for older children and half an hour a day for pre-schoolers. It’s an older model from a linear age and doesn’t encourage quality, innovation, or look at how the world, and storytelling with it, is changing. A new model would emphasise quality over quantity. The development of compelling, relatable stories that you just have to keep watching. It would put Australian kids content right on the menu where other content for kids is located and promote and market it.

Ideally, with so much interest in the subject (three separate government reviews are currently underway), everyone would come together to discuss how best to achieve an outcome which is in the best interests of children’s audiences now and in the future. But the commercial broadcasters aren’t interested in doing that. They don’t really want to make the brussel sprouts interesting or easy to find. Their preferred solution is to take them off the menu.

Where is Clips and Cuts?

Regular readers of small screen will have noticed that our usual centre pages which feature cuttings from newspapers are missing. We have decided to discontinue this section.

To stay up-to-date with what the news media are saying about children and the media, make sure that you subscribe to our regular free E-Bulletin.

More information about the E-Bulletin and past copies can be found on our website: www.childrenandmedia.org.au
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RESEARCH METHODS
Miller, J., et al 2017 Looking beyond swiping and tapping: Review of design and methodologies for researching young children’s use of digital technologies

Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace, 11(3), article 6.


SCREEN TIME


Ocfom 2017 *Research Report: Children and parents: Media use and attitudes*

VIOLENCE


The experiment involved completing questionnaires on violent games played and on empathy, together with the recording of participants’ brain waves using electroencephalography (EEG) during an emotion recognition task.

Taken together, the researchers reported that their results are consistent with the idea that the chronic playing of violent video games affects people’s empathy and the way their brains process emotional facial expressions and control their behavioural responses.

The researchers concluded that “It is possible that chronically playing violent video games can leave gamers callous, cool and in control. Additional research is needed to better inform policy as well as the community at large regarding the substantial social-cognitive risks associated with violent video play.”


https://academic.oup.com/scan/article/12/12/1869/4344826

Digital Childhood continued from P1

experiences and anxieties that children and young people face. This research must identify the needs of vulnerable children, and the age-determined vulnerabilities of all children, and how they are influenced in a digital context.

The report concludes with 36 recommendations which the authors say can be characterized by 3 observations:

• A child’s need to meet his or her developmental milestones is paramount and must inform research, policy and practice in the digital environment.

• Digital habits start young and impact the journey to adulthood.

• We cannot solely rely on the digital resilience of children. Industry and government must adapt the digital environment to make it fit for children by acting above and beyond commercial consideration.

http://5rightsframework.com

New evidence on the effect of violent video games

A recent study by researchers at Loyola University Chicago has added to the scientific evidence of the effects of violent video game play.

The study took a closer look at how gamers and non-gamers differ at a neural level, uncovering evidence that suggests that frequent violent gameplay may affect emotional brain processing. The participants were male with an average age of 21. The experiment involved completing questionnaires on violent games played and on empathy, together with the recording of participants’ brain waves using electroencephalography (EEG) during an emotion recognition task.

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International group calls on Facebook to scrap Messenger Kids

Child development experts and advocates are urging Facebook to discontinue Messenger Kids, its new messaging app aimed at children in the 6-12 age group.

Led by the Boston-based Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood, the group of over 100 people, which includes psychiatrists, pediatricians and educators, sent a letter to Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg.

The group says that the app is likely to undermine healthy childhood development for preschool and elementary-school-aged kids by increasing the amount of time they spend with digital devices. They say that their concern is backed by recent studies that link increased depression, poor sleep habits, and unhealthy body image in children and teens with higher use of social media and digital devices.

The group is contesting Facebook’s claims of filling a need. “Messenger Kids is not responding to a need — it is creating one,” the letter states. “It appeals primarily to children and teens with higher use of social media and digital devices.

The letter concludes:

Doing better is leaving younger children alone and allowing them to develop without the pressures that come with social media use. Raising children in our new digital age is difficult enough. We ask that you do not use Facebook’s enormous reach and influence to make it even harder. Please make a strong statement that Facebook is committed to the wellbeing of children and society by pulling the plug on Messenger Kids.

More information and an online petition can be found on the CCFC website at: www.commercialfreechildhood.org