

Families and the Information Age

From the Editor's Desk --

NEED A NAME FOR EDITORIAL

Electronic communication technologies such as television and the Internet are providing new opportunities as well as creating new challenges to family and community life. The articles in this issue will address topics such as media responsibility, media literacy, the impact of public opinion polls reported in the news, violence on television, legislative and court decisions related to regulating television and the Internet, ensuring Internet access for all segments of the population, how the Internet and television can be used to convey information and encourage citizen participation, how older citizens can keep up with technology, and new ways that communication technologies can make life easier for families. (Brian Wilcox, UN-L)

Family Life Today

How Families Can Survive and Succeed in the Information Age

This article will provide an overview of research about the positive and negative impact that television and the Internet are having on family and community life, and will emphasize how parents and young people can learn critical thinking and analytic skills to become media-savvy. (Negotiating with Dr. John Murray at Kansas State to do this article)

Additional article for this section -- Public Opinion Polls: How They Shape

Perceptions

Every week a new public opinion poll makes headlines in the nation's newspapers or on television -- "More Women are Dissatisfied With Family Responsibilities," "Adult Americans Are Down on the Nation's Children," "Men More Reluctant to Marry," etc. (We will get real headlines.....these are just fake ones....). This article will discuss the impact that this steady stream of public opinion poll results that are reported by the media are having on the way families think about themselves. (Brian Wilcox is arranging an author)

An Alternative View

Parents and the V Chip

Many people want to control the amount of violence children see on television. Efforts to do this include legislative proposals to limit the amount of violence, create television rating systems, and promote the use of the V chip, a mechanical device that would allow parents to screen out violent television shows. This article will include some of the research surrounding the effects of television violence on children. It will argue that the best way to combat the impact that television violence has on children is by watching these programs with your children and discussing what they see. (Carl has an author)

The Television Rating System: Four Fatal Flaws

(By George Gerbner???)

To many American parents, the television rating system appears to be a positive step toward helping them determine what their children should watch. But some people have begun to question how informative this "age-based, movie-style rating system" is and whether it truly helps parents protect their children from being exposed to sex, violence, and foul language on television. Dr. George Gerbner will discuss the four fatal flaws of this rating system as well as discuss the violence children are seeing on television and whether this rating system can keep viewers from flocking to violent programs. He will suggest ways in which media-watch groups, citizens, parents, and public interest groups can make their voices heard. (Approx. 6-10 pages)

Possible short sidebar -- some practical tips and information from "Remote Control Childhood?: Combating the Hazards of Media Culture" by Diane Levine (National Association for the Education of Young Children). This 174-page book provides strategies to minimize the media culture's harmful effects on children.

Another possible short sidebar -- A discussion and review of software that will limit what children can access on the Internet.

Innovations on the Frontline

The articles in this section will highlight examples of technology that has been applied to programs that serve children, families, and communities.

Parent Mutual Assistance projects -- Gregg Wright and/or Ginny Berman will write about their computer-network parent mutual assistance projects. (Gregg also has done some clever software to guide self-care by children with chronic health problems, which we may be able to use a box on this for the innovations section)

Economic Development example -- ACEnet has experimented with the use of civic networks to transform the depressed regional economy in 10 counties in rural Appalachian Ohio. (Carl)

Community Networking/Participation -- I will call Dr. Lodis Rhodes at the University of Texas to see if he will write a short article about the network they created in six poor neighborhoods in Austin, Texas and the lessons they learned from the project.

Telemedicine -- We will find a good telemedicine program to highlight, perhaps one that is using computers and television technology to serve people in rural areas where specialists doctors are not readily available for consults. (Also, possible short box on telepsychiatry program in SC)

Making It Happen

Getting Early Brain Development on The Front Page

Early brain development were cover stories in Time and Newsweek in 1987 rather than in magazines that traditionally focus on children and families. This article will examine the media strategy behind the "I Am Your Child" campaign, led by actor/producer Rob Reiner. It will look at the message, the medium, the target audience and the effectiveness of the campaign. The campaign was the impetus for the Early Childhood Development Act of 1997 introduced by U.S. senators John Kerry (D-MA) and Kit Bond (R-MO). (Author -- Ross Thompson.)

Action on the Hill

This article will focus on current communications and telecommunications legislation. (Brian Wilcox will find someone who keeps up on this legislation to write this article.)

Courtwatch

This article will focus on the major legal issues regarding what children are exposed to at public schools and public libraries and what limitations are placed on their access. As new technologies/forms of media are increasing, the range of First Amendment questions around them are similar to those raised in regard to children and traditional forms of media. The article will also include a discussion of parental authority. (Dr. Dave Moshman at UN-L will write this article.)

Lessons From Abroad

Media Literacy in the Schools: A Look at (Britain's, or Canada's, or Australia's, or Spain's) Programs

These countries include media literacy education as part of their schools' language arts curriculum in grades 7 through 12. Media literacy helps children become more savvy media consumers, thus better protecting themselves and helping them to become better citizens. This article would focus on what children learn in these programs. (Will follow up with woman in Australia).

View from the Other Side

Analog Minds in a Digital World

People in their 50s, 60s, 70s today were born when clocks had faces, stoves had ovens controlled by a dial with numbers on it, and VCRs, home computers, and microwave ovens didn't exist. Today, more and more appliances use digital technology to operate them. And, more people are using home computers. Card catalogs at the local library have been replaced by computers. This article will explore how older citizens are coping with this new world of technology. (Working on an author for this article.)