

Children's Magazines Look to Future

By DEIRDRE CARMODY

"Oooh, too disgusting," Zane said. "Why do you have to take pictures like that?"

"So disgusting," Glendaly said. "But it's interesting."

"I think you should run more," Patrick said.

"Sick," Ghislane said.

This is high-powered stuff, and don't think it is not being listened to by the magazine industry. The comments, from a small group of fourth- and fifth-graders looking at pictures of insects in a magazine for 8- to 14-year-olds, go directly to the fundamental question in the industry today: How can today's children be turned into magazine readers?

Strong Prospects

"We are very concerned about how children perceive magazines at this early point in their lives," said Renee Cherow-O'Leary, director of research for the magazine group of Children's Television Workshop. "Their first experiences with magazines can be the start of a lifelong relationship with this medium and with the printed word."

Magazine industry executives love big numbers. So they salivate at the possibilities presented by 33 million children 4 to 12 years old who spend or influence the spending of more than \$170 billion a year, according to Nina B. Link, senior vice president/publisher of the magazine group at CTW.

"There has been an explosion of new kids' magazines," Ms. Link told publishers at the American Magazine Conference in Bermuda last month. "In the past five years, the number of magazines for youngsters has almost doubled with the introduction of 81 new titles. There are over 150 magazines for kids that are as diverse as their adult counterparts."

Magazine publishers are also very much aware of the shifts in children's television viewing habits: a jump in the use of videocassette recorders and video games. The publishers are eager to take whatever advantage they can of trends like the reduction in Saturday morning children's television programs and the somewhat smaller fall-off in children's after-

noon television viewing.

"The kids' print market is truly one of the growth markets in the business," said Lynn Lehmkuhl, publisher of Disney Adventures, "but advertising is all being funneled into television because advertisers say there is no research that exists that tells them that kids read."

Last spring the publishers of many of the leading children's magazines got together to try to remedy this. Calling themselves Kids MagNET, this curious alliance of competing publications agreed to pool their efforts and finance a major research study for advertisers.

"Right now we are being incredibly cordial to each other," Ms. Lehmkuhl said.

At this point, the group is trying to evaluate exactly what kind of re-

Publishers aim at a market responsible for \$170 billion of spending a year.

search advertisers need.

"We all know the power that lies in Kids' print and it is our job to impart that," said Donna Sabino, senior research manager for Sports Illustrated for Kids, who is coordinating the research for Kids MagNET.

The publishers are convinced that a hungry readership is out there. Ms. Lehmkuhl said Disney Adventures received 1,800 subscription requests a week. The magazine, aimed at 6- to 14-year-olds, has doubled its circulation, to 700,000 a month, in its two years. Ms. Lehmkuhl thinks the circulation could easily go to one million but said that for now the advertising to support it was not there.

Children's magazines also do intensive editorial research. At Disney Adventures and Sports Illustrated for Kids, which has a circulation of 934,000, children review and analyze every issue of the magazine. In addition to the children's focus groups, the CTW magazines have recruited a net-

work of parents and teachers — well aware that it is they who order the subscriptions — to review the magazines regularly.

"When we are talking to kids, we see what holds their interest, where they stop reading, what gets them excited," said Dr. O'Leary of CTW. "Kids are very concerned about social problems. They know about AIDS and homelessness and often they are the ones pushing their parents."

They also like to ask why. Among the letters received by 3-2-1 Contact, a CTW science magazine for children 8 to 14 years old, are these:

Dear Contact, What is death-like?

Dear Contact, When you pierce your ears, where does the skin go?

Dr. O'Leary said that often the comments showed a surprising degree of sophistication. She told of one fourth-grader who was shown a comic strip and remarked, "These aren't ha-ha comics; you're trying to teach me something, and I don't know if comics should be doing that."

Attention Grabbers

Last week the CTW research staff and the editor of Contact met with small groups of fourth-, fifth- and sixth-graders at the Manhattan New School on the Upper East Side to talk about the November issue. They talked about a section dealing with prejudice and one on why people in other parts of the world eat some 500 species of insects. The attention grabbers were the vivid illustrations of people eating mopane worms and other insects.

After the session, Dr. O'Leary and Marianne Vaughan, who had led the discussion, found that while the children's overall comprehension was at the level of the magazine, their literacy level was somewhat lower. When they were given a page to read, their reactions were more muted than during the discussion.

"I also think we should recognize that at this age, abstract concepts have to be translated into very concrete terms," Dr. O'Leary said.

One surprise was that boys as well as girls were repelled by the pictures of the insects. "It was interesting along boy-girl lines," Dr. O'Leary said. "It did not break down that way at all."

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Dr. Cherow-O'Leary Brings Strong Abilities, Qualifications

Television's Impact Expert Leads Creating Critical Viewers

An accomplished and versatile national leader in media literacy education, Dr. Renee Cherow-O'Leary, has, after a wide-ranging search, been named National Coordinator for Creating Critical Viewers, the National Academy's media literacy project offering free educational material to secondary school students with the objective of developing discriminating television viewers.

As Director of Research of the Publishing/Schools Group of the Children's Television Workshop, Dr. Cherow-O'Leary focused on the appeal and comprehension of television materials for children, parents and teachers, as well as the assessment of their needs through a variety of polls and surveys. She is the editor of a new book, *Youth Re-*



Dr. Renee Cherow-O'Leary

search, published in 1995.

These skills in reaching youth and educators will serve her well as she spearheads the ambitious CCV program that will involve the active support of all local NATAS Chapters.

With Chapter input, Dr. Cherow-O'Leary will assess the current program and design a flexible national model. She will coordinate the creation of marketing materials, training manuals

and operational handbooks.

Enhancing communication between national leadership and chapters, including an annual local coordinators' conference, will be among the new CCV coordinator's responsibilities.

By developing alliances with public and private organizations, Dr. Cherow-O'Leary will provide enhanced resources to make sure NATAS achieves its goals of media literacy – especially dealing with issues of violence on television – for American students.

As a university professor of communications for 15 years, Dr. Cherow-O'Leary developed many courses on the social impact of mass media. She was selected to be a fellow in Media and Public Policy in the Annenberg Washington Program. The dissertation for her Ph.D., in Communications and Public Policy from New York University, studied the community strategies of public television stations in using media as a delivery system for social services.

Dr. Cherow-O'Leary is the founder of an informal think tank of educators called "Education for the 21st Century" whose goal is to gather models of best practice in education from around the world. She has a B.A. in English and Philosophy from Barnard College and an M.A.T. in English and Education from the University of Chicago.

The combination of abilities and experiences Dr. Cherow-O'Leary brings to her new position as Coordinator of the NATAS Creating Critical Viewers program insures its continued growth and ultimate success.

Trustees in San Francisco

(continued from page 1)

of the Board David Louie said the Academy is moving forward, developing exciting and new services to the industry and to NATAS members.

One example is the development of "EmmyOnline," a comprehensive web page on the Internet, which will provide members, the television community at large and the public with information on National Academy news, programs, awards and industry issues. In addition, the Trustees heard from the Visions and Horizons Committee that "EmmyOnline" will enable all 17 chapters to develop their own web pages, which will be accessible to millions of people.

Another example is the Creating Critical Viewers program, which was cited by *Broadcasting & Cable* magazine as a model for the industry. All 17 Chapters have engaged professional coordinators to assist classroom teachers to utilize the media literacy curriculum NATAS helped develop. A respected National Coordinator for CCV has been appointed (see story left).

The Awards Committee reported that the Daytime Emmy Awards are planned for late May with CBS carrying the show in prime time. Negotiations are underway to originate the telecast from Radio City Music Hall. The Sports Emmy Awards will be presented in late April, and the News & Documentary Awards will once again be held in mid-September.

Dr. Norman Felsenthal, chairman of the National Scholarship Committee, outlined plans to solicit applications for the second year. The two \$20,000 national scholarships, along with scholarships granted by the local chapters, make NATAS a leader in providing aid to students seeking careers in the everchanging world of communications. (See story, page 9.)

Linda Giannecchini, president of the San Francisco/Northern California chapter, along with a local committee, assisted the national office with the very successful Board of Trustees meeting.

NATAS Press Kit Developed

The Public Relations Committee of NATAS has produced a lively and complete Press Kit that details every aspect of The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. The Press Kit's format is flexible, it can be adjusted to respond to specific requests, and can be localized for use by Chapters.

This press kit offers information about NATAS awards and programs, as well as the structure of the organization. It explains the different Emmys, how they evolved and how they're awarded; and, in addition, it presents the history and

achievements of NATAS.

Details are provided in this Press Kit about the many activities and services of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, including the Academic Scholarships, the *Television Quarterly*, the course curriculum Creating Critical Viewers, plus the NATAS Newsletter, lectures, seminars and more.

Chapter administrators or volunteers who may be able to use the Press Kit are encouraged to contact the NATAS Media Relations office to obtain a copy. Call (212) 586-8424 or direct e-mail to BChris8140@aol.com.