

*The 5th Annual APPC  
Conference on Children  
and Media: A Summary*

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The University of Pennsylvania**

**Report #39**

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## *FOREWORD*

The Annenberg Public Policy Center was established by publisher and philanthropist Walter Annenberg in 1994 to create a community of scholars within the University of Pennsylvania which would address public policy issues at the local, state and federal levels. Consistent with the mission of the Annenberg School for Communication, the Center has four ongoing foci: Information and Society; Media and the Developing Mind; Media and the Dialogue of Democracy; and Health Communication. The Center supports research and sponsors lectures and conferences in these areas. This series of publications disseminates the work of the Center.



Kathleen Hall Jamieson

Director

## *ABOUT THE AUTHORS*

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## *ABSTRACT*

The Annenberg Public Policy Center (APPC) of the University of Pennsylvania convened its fifth annual Conference on Children and Media on June 26, 2000, at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. Conference participants included members of the television industry, advertisers, producers of children's programming, advocates, researchers, and policy makers of children's media.

The conference reported the findings of APPC's: 1) annual national survey of media in the home; 2) analysis of the educational strength of children's programs identified as "educational and informational" by broadcast networks; and 3) focus groups with children and mothers of children in the third, sixth and ninth grades to assess their understanding of the Three-Hour Rule and the V-Chip technology and ratings system.

The conference featured a plenary session exploring the future of children's media and included concurrent panel discussions addressing three issues currently relevant to children's media and the child audience: 1) media mergers and collaborations; 2) consumer culture; and 3) media rights and obligations to children. Gloria Tristani, Federal Communications Commissioner and Chair of the V-Chip Task Force, gave the conference's keynote address. During the conference award ceremony, Joan Ganz Cooney, Co-Founder of Children's Television Workshop and Co-creator of *Sesame Street*, was presented with the APPC Award for Distinguished Contribution to Children and Television. APPC presented the APPC Award for Best E/I Program on a Commercial Broadcast Station to *Disney's Doug*. Executive Producers Jim Jinkins and David Campbell accepted the award.

## *INTRODUCTION*

On June 26, 2000, the Annenberg Public Policy Center (APPC) of the University of Pennsylvania held its fifth annual Conference on Children and Media at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. The conference is part of the APPC's ongoing commitment to monitor the state of children's media and recognize noteworthy efforts and achievements in the development and distribution of quality children's programming. In response to the increasingly diverse media environment of children's homes, APPC changed the conference title from the Conference on Children and Television to the Conference on Children and Media. This year's conference explored the future of children's media, the impact of media mergers and the consumer culture on the child audience, as well as media rights and obligations to children. APPC issued two awards at the conference: the APPC Award for Distinguished Contribution to Children and Television and the APPC Award for Best E/I (educational/informational) Program on a Commercial Broadcast Station.

Three research reports were released and presented at this year's conference, including: 1) an annual national survey of parents and children to assess children's use of television and other media and parents' and children's attitudes toward media; 2) a content analysis of children's programs receiving the E/I (educational/informational) label to assess how well such programs are meeting the standard and spirit of the FCC's "Three-Hour Rule"; and 3) focus group discussions with children and mothers on their understanding and awareness of the "Three Hour Rule" and V-Chip regulations.

## *THE ANNENBERG PUBLIC POLICY CENTER'S PRESS CONFERENCE*

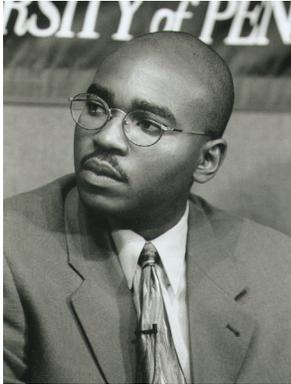


Amy Jordan

The conference began with a press briefing hosted by Amy Jordan, Senior Research Investigator and director of the children's media project at the Annenberg Public Policy Center. Jordan provided an overview of the three research reports that were released at the briefing and introduced the authors of the reports.

## *THE RESEARCH REPORTS ON CHILDREN AND MEDIA*

**MEDIA IN THE HOME 2000:  
THE FIFTH ANNUAL  
SURVEY OF PARENTS AND  
CHILDREN (WOODARD)**



Emory Woodard

Emory H. Woodard, IV, research fellow at the Annenberg Public Policy Center, presented the findings of the fifth annual national survey of 1235 parents of children between the ages of 2 and 17 and 416 children between the ages of 8 and 16. The survey, conducted in April 2000 by Roper Starch Worldwide on behalf of APPC, provided a profile of media ownership, use and attitudes among children and their parents. It also measured parental awareness, knowledge, and use of public policies designed to regulate media. Additionally, this year's survey examined media use in children's bedrooms and parental supervision of media in the home.

Homes with children contain a variety of media. In fact, families with children that own a TV, VCR, videogames, and a computer increased 15% between 1997 and 2000, with nearly one half of families (48%) owning all four media hardware in 2000. Media, television in particular (57%), are also prevalent in children's bedrooms. For the first time in five years, more families with children had online access than had newspaper subscriptions (52% and 42%, respectively). A digital divide continues to exist for information technologies. Although low income families are equally as likely as higher-income families to own video game equipment, they are less likely to own computers or have Internet access. In response to an audience member's question, Woodard observed that children in lower income families spend more time with media overall than children from higher income households.

Although parents express high levels of concern regarding the media, they are ill-equipped to benefit from existing media policies to help their children safely navigate the media environment. Despite their concern, parental awareness of the TV parental guidelines rating system has dropped sharply this year, from 70% in 1997, when the ratings first went into effect,

to 50% in 2000. Only 39% of all parents use the TV rating system, in contrast to the 80% that use the MPAA ratings to guide their child's movie viewing. Furthermore, 84% of parents could not accurately identify the TV age rating for any of the programs their children regularly watch and have little awareness of programs labeled as educational and informational for children. Importantly, those aware of the rating system do use it. Nearly 80% of those aware of the system report using it to guide their children's television viewing.

Finally, as their media environment changes, different patterns of media use by children and media supervision by parents emerge. On average, regardless of income, children who use a computer spend 15 minutes less watching television each day. Additionally, parents are more likely to supervise their children's use of television than their use of the Internet or video games.

## *Is the Three Hour Rule Living Up to Its Potential? An Analysis of Educational Television for Children in the 1999/2000 Broadcast Season (Jordan)*

Amy Jordan reported the primary findings of the annual content analysis of the educational and informational offerings of commercial broadcasters. The study found that the ten commercial broadcast stations in the Philadelphia area aired an average of 3.4 hours of core educational programming for children each week during the fourth quarter of 1999. The content analysis of these programs was based on three episodes for each of the 41 program titles, 38 of which were submitted by the producer or network. The remaining programs were taped off the air. Each episode was examined for educational strength based on the extent to which the programs contained clear, well integrated lessons that are age-appropriate and engaging for the target audience and are conveyed in ways that are relevant to the child viewer.

Many of the educational/informational (E/I) programs available to children met the letter and sometimes the spirit of the Three-Hour Rule. The majority of the E/I programs (57%) were considered moderately educational. One fifth of programs were classified as highly educational and included programs such as *Squigglevision*, *Disney's Doug*, *Bill Nye the Science Guy*, and *Popular Mechanics for Kids*. As in previous years, however, nearly one fourth of the programs (23%) were judged to be minimally educational.

Although the Three-Hour Rule has resulted in more reasonable scheduling of educational children's programs, these shows are often preempted by sports programming. For example, the CBS affiliate in Philadelphia preempted two of their programs more often than they aired them in the first two quarters of this season. Furthermore, E/I labeling of programs are not available in television listings and the E/I symbols identifying these shows are quite confusing, making it difficult for parents to identify educational programs for their children.

Based on these findings, Jordan presented three recommendations to optimize the potential of the educational programming mandate. First, more outreach is needed to make parents aware of the programming that has resulted from the implementation of the Three-Hour Rule. Second, broadcasters and E/I program producers need feedback from policy researchers, advocacy groups, and parents in order to make their programs effective

educational tools. Finally, children need to know that the programs they want to watch will consistently air when scheduled.

## *Public Policy, Family Rules and Children's Media Use in The Home (Schmitt)*



Kelly Schmitt

Kelly L. Schmitt, research fellow at the Annenberg Public Policy Center, presented the results of 24 focus group discussions with children and mothers of children in the third, sixth, and ninth grades. Conducted in the winter of 2000, the study explored parents' and children's understanding of the Three-Hour Rule, the V-Chip technology, and the V-Chip rating system. Groups were stratified by the child's grade, gender and suburban or urban location.

Overall, many parents are concerned about and have rules for their children's television viewing. These rules vary by family, as some limit the number of hours a child can view and others limit exposure to certain television programs, such as wrestling and R-rated movies. Parents are more interested in mediating the television viewing habits of and were particularly concerned about the harmful effects of exposure to television among younger children.

Multiple media compete for children's time and interests and, as a result, parents' concerns about these other media vary based on their child's interest in the medium and their level of comfort with it. For example, mothers of sixth grade boys were most concerned about video games, while mothers of adolescents were especially concerned about rap music and the Internet. However, parents often feel they do not have enough information or skills to control children's use of media.

Due to their low awareness of public policies such as the Three-Hour Rule and V-Chip legislation, parents are not using the E/I or V-Chip ratings to guide their children's viewing. Only 2 of the 62 mothers in the study were aware of the Three-Hour Rule and few were familiar with the E/I programs or on-screen identifiers. Children were more likely to be familiar with the on-screen identifiers, but the majority could not discern their meaning.

Although more mothers had heard of the V-Chip than the Three-Hour Rule, few reported using it. Many felt it would be useful to restrict the viewing of an older child home alone or a child with a television set in his or her bedroom. Others argued that their children would get around the blocking device by going elsewhere to watch or that it would be difficult to institute a new set of rules about television for a teenager. Although children were

familiar with the age-based ratings, they were unfamiliar with many of the content ratings. Mothers were even less knowledgeable than their children and were confused about who provides the information. Those who have looked for information on the ratings have been frustrated by the lack of accessible information. Perhaps as a result, parents do not trust the ratings and these mothers were unlikely to use the ratings to guide their children's viewing.

Based on this research, Schmitt recommended persuading parents that television can be a valuable resource for school-age children and making them aware that educational programs are available on commercial broadcast stations. Additionally, public service and promotional campaigns are needed to inform parents about the tools that are available to them to help them guide their children's viewing. Finally, in order to make reasoned, deliberate choices about their children's media use, parents need to be able to locate and understand the information, programming, and technology that currently exist.

## *KEYNOTE ADDRESS:*

GLORIA TRISTANI, COMMISSIONER, THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION; CHAIR, THE FCC V-CHIP TASK FORCE

**EMORY H. WOODARD, IV  
INTRODUCED THE  
CONFERENCE'S KEYNOTE  
SPEAKER, GLORIA  
TRISTANI, FCC  
COMMISSIONER AND  
CHAIR OF THE V-CHIP TASK  
FORCE.**



Gloria Tristani

In her address on children and television, Commissioner Gloria Tristani emphasized ways to protect children from the potentially harmful effects of television without depriving adults of their First Amendment rights. She stated, “The most popular sham objection to protecting children from harmful media influences is the First Amendment. We can’t protect our children, the argument goes, because that would deny adults their First Amendment rights. We can protect our children, but only at the expense of the First Amendment. I reject that thinking. We do not have to choose between protecting our children and protecting the First Amendment. We can do both.” She focused her remarks on three opportunities to provide a balance between protecting children from harmful media and adults’ rights to free speech: 1) the V-Chip; 2) the FCC’s indecency enforcement; and 3) the application of the obscenity standard to excessive violence available to children through the media.

Commissioner Tristani began her discussion of the V-Chip by noting that earlier problems with V-Chip set availability and limited programmer use of V-Chip ratings have been resolved. She noted that television manufacturers met the deadline for the distribution of sets with the V-Chip installed, and that virtually all of the major broadcast and cable networks, and all of the major syndicators are encoding and transmitting the ratings for their programs. However, despite these steps, she stated that many parents continue to be unaware of the V-Chip. She argued that a major effort to educate parents about the V-Chip is needed to ensure its success. Despite critics’ eagerness to proclaim the V-Chip a failure in response to parents’ lack of awareness, the V-Chip’s success or failure cannot yet be assessed because this new technology became standard only six months ago. Commissioner Tristani stressed that the V-Chip does not constitute a form of government censorship, but rather that it “empowers parents, not the government, to decide what material can be shown in their homes.”

On the second issue, the FCC’s enforcement of indecency standards, Commissioner Tristani noted that the U.S. Supreme Court has upheld the FCC’s indecency rules as appropriately balancing First Amendment Rights to free speech and parents’ needs. However, she lamented that the Commission rarely exercises its authority over indecent material and has, in fact, erected a number of procedural barriers for members of the public who want to file

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**KEYNOTE ADDRESS:**

an indecency or obscenity complaint. Most notably, the FCC requires tapes, transcripts or significant excerpts of offending material. Commissioner Tristani indicated that individuals can sue broadcasters for libel or slander without having to clear the procedural hurdles that the Commission set for indecency investigations. She argued that “the First Amendment should not be read to require a higher standard for indecency than for filing a lawsuit for libel or slander. It’s time for the Commission to take down the procedural barriers that frustrate concerned parents. It’s our duty to the law, and more important, our duty to our children.”

In her discussion of the third option, applying the obscenity standard to violent images, Commissioner Tristani rejected the assumption that all speech depicting violence is protected by the First Amendment. Elaborating on legal arguments developed by Professor Kevin Saunders of the University of Oklahoma School of Law, Commissioner Tristani noted that the FCC and the U.S. Supreme Court share the same definition of obscenity. In 1957, the Supreme Court ruled that obscene speech was not protected speech in *Roth v. United States*. This decision limited the legal definition of obscenity to sexual and excretory activities. However, Commissioner Tristani agreed with Saunders’ legal analysis demonstrating there is no justification to limit the obscenity doctrine to sex and excretory activities. Rather, Commissioner Tristani observed, legal precedence would suggest that obscene speech could include obscenely violent speech and images as well. Based on this argument, Commissioner Tristani suggested that because excessively violent images can be included as obscene images, State and Federal Governments can and should legislate obscenely violent images that reach children.

Commissioner Tristani concluded by suggesting that where regulation fails, parents must take steps to protect their children from harmful media. “I’d like to get back to the cliché- a cliché but true- children are our future. As a public official, I would like to protect them by law and regulation. But if law and regulation fail our children, what is my choice? As a citizen and a mother, I can protect my young child by using the V-Chip, turning off the TV, or using the business model, which is not buying the goods or services from advertisers who sponsor, and thereby support, violent programming. And I can only hope others do so as well.”

## *PLENARY SESSION: THE FUTURE OF CHILDREN'S MEDIA*

**MODERATOR**

Amy Jordan, *Senior Research Investigator, The Annenberg Public Policy Center*

**PANELISTS**

Gary Knell, *President and CEO, Sesame Workshop*

Pat Mitchell, *President and CEO, PBS*

Kathryn Montgomery, *President, The Center for Media Education*

Rich Ross, *Executive Vice President, General Manager, Disney Channel*

Patti Valkenburg, *Professor, University of Amsterdam*

*Amy Jordan introduced the panel of representatives of industry, academia, and advocacy groups. She noted that media designed for and used by children are rapidly evolving and she invited the panelists to provide insights on the future of children's media and how the media of the future might influence children's development and address their needs and interests.*



Patti Valkenburg, Rich Ross, Kathryn Montgomery

**THE IMPACT OF MORE MEDIA CHOICES**

Gary Knell indicated that in order to continue attracting children, Sesame Workshop looks at the ways children's media experience is changing. In particular, Sesame Workshop focuses on where and how children experience media. He noted that today's children and families have more positive media choices than ever before, and that "in less cluttered times we could attract mass audiences to certain safe havens." Children's media experience will be driven by the large number of choices that children have available. Furthermore, he argued that children's experience will change as they will have greater control over their media choices and that experience. He remarked, "It will be about kids making decisions about what they want,

when they want it-- whether it's a two hour movie, a two minute online segment, or multimedia combination of both." He added that Sesame Workshop was looking into broadband application of the company's assets with America Online and is considering an on-demand type feature to enable children and families to create their own shows using *Sesame Street* characters.

Given these changes, Knell predicted that already-established media brands will have greater success in reaching children. He said, "Kids are going to make choices by what they already know. We believe they'll turn to the brands that they know and trust and this is true especially since the Internet economy bubble has burst. A lot of entities jumping into that space and trying to do some good stuff with kids and education are going to have a hard time breaking through the clutter." Moreover, he noted that in order for a brand to stand out, it will continue to be important to be a part of children's culture, through steps such as product licensing. He indicated that Sesame Workshop's educational value is extended through products such as records, videos, and on the Internet. Finally, he emphasized that Sesame Workshop would continue to test their materials with children to ensure that their content is relevant and engaging for children in their changing media environment.

**LITERACY IS THE KEY TO  
FUTURE MEDIA**



Pat Mitchell

Pat Mitchell emphasized that literacy is the key to using new media. In response to low literacy rates among school-age children and the need for literacy to use new media, PBS has made literacy a critical component of its children's programming. Mitchell announced that eight new book-based television shows are planned for the fall and that each program is accompanied by ready-to-learn materials and online content to extend the value and content of PBS television programs. She explained that literacy skills are further developed at PBS Online, where, unlike television, the interactive nature of the medium can accommodate different learning styles. She stated, "Our kid-driven approach to new media is tailored also to fit different learning styles. On online, kids can pace themselves. On online, kids can adapt to their own different learning styles and needs, such as those who use English as a second language and are learning English, or those who read more slowly. It gives them a chance to adapt to their own pace of learning." She argued that the new media also empower children, build their confidence, and enable them to think more creatively.

**CONCERNS ABOUT  
MARKETING TO CHILDREN**

Kathryn Montgomery discussed the variety of media available to children and the opportunities associated with digital media to allow children to be educated and to explore. Despite these advantages, she emphasized that

this does not ensure quality media products or universal access. She stated that children are now growing up in a powerful media culture that treats children as a lucrative target market. She added, "In many ways, children and teens are defining the new digital media -- the ways they are using the new media, the services that are being designed for them are often the prototypes for what we will be living with and certainly what succeeding generations will be using."

Montgomery also expressed concern about the frequency with which the line between content and marketing has become blurred. She anticipates that the new media culture will be greatly influenced by the integration of media content, commerce, marketing and advertising. She warned that some online marketing efforts pose a threat to children's privacy. In particular, she expressed concern about the lack of regulation of sites collecting data from, profiling, and marketing to teenagers. Given the role of advertising in new media, she stressed the need for non-commercial, civic-minded web sites, saying, "We really need to ensure that there is a vital, noncommercial civic sector in any digital media landscape. One that serves young people not just as consumers, but also as future citizens."

**SERVING THE "TWEEN"  
MARKET**

Rich Ross focused his remarks on the Disney Channel's efforts to serve the "tween" market, a group that he stated is and will continue to be the fastest growing demographic group. He noted that the term "tweens" is often used to describe children of various ages, most notably between the ages of nine and twelve or fourteen. He stated, "But it's not about a chronological age; it's more about a stage. A 'tween' is someone with one foot in the kid's world and another in the teenage world. 'Tweens' are trying to create a balance, which is quite a challenge in the media rich world of exploding choices from the TV, to the Internet, videogames, CDs, DVDs, MP3s." He stated that in the past this audience has not been well-served by the media. To respond to this need, the Disney Channel has attempted to address "tween" issues in programming by providing programs that reflect the interests and realities of this group. He noted that technology shapes much of what the Disney Channel does and that they have used the Internet to extend the Disney Channel experience. Sites such as Disney Channel's ZOOG Disney are intended to provide a bridge between the TV and online worlds of "tweens," who are quite Internet savvy.

**CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES  
WITH THE INTERNET**



Patti Valkenburg

Patti Valkenburg presented preliminary results from a study of 194 Dutch children between the ages of nine and twelve regarding their use of and likes and dislikes of the Internet. All children in the study used the Internet at home. Although children's reasons for using the Internet vary, she noted that affinity to computers was the most frequently cited reason, followed by obtaining information on hobbies, idols, and homework. Moreover, children were most likely to mention information on hobbies, idols, and Internet. One-fourth of children (24.7%) have had some sort of unpleasant experience on the Internet, with the largest number of these experiences involving a computer virus. Less than two percent of children experienced some kind of sexual harassment.

Valkenburg noted that despite widespread use of the Internet among children, little media effects research has been conducted on the Internet and she emphasized that additional research is needed in this area. She concluded, "It's realistic to expect that the Internet generation, born in the nineties, will spend several years of their lives interacting with new media, so these media really deserve our full research attention."

**MEDIA LITERACY**

In response to a question from audience member Robert Kubey, of the Center for Media Studies at Rutgers University, many of the panelists agreed that media literacy skills continue to be needed, for new media as well as older media. Kathryn Montgomery stated, "We always talk about kids being very media savvy and more sophisticated than we are. But, in fact, that doesn't mean that they are critical users; that they think and understand, for example, what the motives are in a commercial website." Gary Knell added that adults need this education, as well. Pat Mitchell noted that PBS Online websites encourage children to evaluate television programs and websites in critical ways. Audience member Macenje "Che Che" Mazoka, of PBS affiliate WNET-TV13, pointed out that her station offers parenting workshops focusing on media literacy and that resources are available for integrating media literacy education into the classroom at the high school and college level.

## *MEDIA MERGERS & COLLABORATIONS: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CHILD AUDIENCE*

### MODERATOR

Joseph Turow, *Professor, The Annenberg School for Communication*

### PANELISTS

J. Cory Allen, *The Annenberg School for Communication*

Jeffrey Dunn, *Chief Operating Officer, Nickelodeon*

Janine Jaquet, *Research Director, Project on Media Ownership, New York University*

Phil Vischer, *Founder, CEO, Big Idea Productions*

Joseph Turow introduced the panelists and opened the session by asking each panelist to discuss their views of children's media within large, consolidated and smaller corporations.



Joseph Turow, Phil Vishcer, Jeff Dunn

### THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE MARKET

The panel members agreed with Janine Jaquet, who stated, "Consolidation is the major trend in media today." Cory Allen began by stating that the pressure of the current economy and government policy allowing the ownership of a larger number of stations has encouraged consolidation, resulting in fewer voices. Although digital television will make many more channels available, he noted that because they are owned by the same corporations no additional voices will be heard. Phil Vischer pointed out that the industry's consolidation has resulted in four media empires that control the vast majority of children's media. He argued that these four media corporations, News Corp., Viacom, Time Warner and Disney, control all commercial broadcast and cable stations serving children, much of children's

publishing, and a great deal of the production of children's television programs. He believes that this consolidation will result in fewer opportunities for small, independent producers. In contrast, Jeff Dunn argued that the market is good for independent producers due to the sheer number of hours of children's television programming to be filled. He asserted that both the number of shows for children and the quality of the content has never been better. However, Dunn wondered if the market can economically sustain the large number of networks offering children's programming. He felt that the four dominant competitors have the resources needed to compete in the market.

Several panelists indicated that the consolidation of the industry may result in innovative formats of material for children. Phil Vischer discussed *VeggieTales*, a children's program featuring "Biblical values." He explained that the program was distributed as a direct-to-consumer video after broadcasters such as PBS refused to air it due to its religious content. In response to a question from audience member Richard Hudson (KTCA-TV, St. Paul Public Television) regarding how to get shows with cognitive lessons, such as fourth grade science, on the air, Jeff Dunn suggested using the Internet, digital television, or other media that are not driven by ratings as a way to distribute such programs when traditional television outlets cannot.

**CAN BIGGER COMPANIES  
SERVE CHILDREN?**



Jeff Dunn

Both Phil Vischer and Janine Jaquet argued that the consolidation of children's media into large corporations will be detrimental to the quality of children's media content. Phil Vischer stated, "In the world of media, you can only be so big and make things that are beneficial. . . . The problem is that all four of these companies are international, publicly traded media conglomerates and the people that are running them are solely motivated by shareholder value." Jaquet added that these large companies have the job of making money in a tremendously competitive environment, suggesting that we cannot expect them to care about educating children. She added that the Project on Media Ownership at New York University plans to launch a website to trace media ownership and corporate connections and she emphasized the need to pressure producers and broadcasters to be socially responsible in the content they air for children. Both Jaquet and Vischer argued that children's needs must be put before those of investors.

Jeff Dunn disagreed with the other panelists, stating "I don't believe a conscience and profits have to be at odds." He stated that Nickelodeon, a cable network owned by Viacom, is operated with values separate from the corporation as a whole and that "what's good for kids is good business." He

noted that even when one company owns a number of networks, the power is decentralized and each network has its own values.

## BRANDING

The panelists agreed that with consolidation, the large number of channels made available through digital television, and increased integration between television and the Internet, a greater emphasis will be placed on brands. Phil Vischer stated, “We can no longer trust the companies that are speaking to our kids. What we’re supposed to trust are brands.” He noted that the large conglomerates distribute a variety of media, as well as children’s media, often distributing material that contradicts the values the public associates with the company. He argued that today these companies want the public to trust a brand, independent of the company’s other assets and actions. Jeff Dunn noted that the brand is a valuable commodity that is reflected upon by their actions. He added with regards to Nickelodeon, “We have built a brand and if we were to go out there and do things that reflect negatively on that brand, then we would diminish probably the greatest asset that Viacom has in its portfolio.” Janine Jaquet predicted that branding will be important to the industry for Internet content, as well. Dunn commented that Nickelodeon is a cross media brand that starts with television; if it works on television Nickelodeon will test it in other platforms, as well.

## *CONSUMER CULTURE AND THE CHILD AUDIENCE*

**MODERATOR**

Emory Woodard, *Research Fellow, The Annenberg Public Policy Center*

**PANELISTS**

Dan S. Acuff, *Youth Marketing System Consulting*

Alison Alexander, Professor & Head of the Telecommunications Department, University of Georgia

Elizabeth Lascoux, Director, Children's Advertising Review Unit (CARU), Better Business Bureau

Robert H. Reiher, *President, Innertainment*

David Walsh, *Founder & President, National Institute on Media and the Family*

Emory Woodard opened the session by describing the quandary of America's consumer culture: on the one hand, consumer culture is, by definition, American culture; on the other hand, many are concerned that consumer culture has become too pervasive. He introduced the panelists and noted that the discussion would focus on how advertisers reach children and the developmental implications of marketing to young children.



Dan Acuff, Alison Alexander, Emory Woodard, Robert Reiher, Elizabeth Lascoux, David Walsh

**ADVERTISING TO CHILDREN: BEYOND TV**



Dan Acuff

Dan Acuff began by explaining the value of the children's market to manufacturers, retailers, and the entertainment industry. Citing James McNeal's book, *The Kids Market: Myths and Realities*, he asserted that the children's market, which he defines as ages four to twelve, is valuable for three reasons: 1) children make a great deal of purchases themselves, 2) they influence their parents' purchases, and 3) they will become future consumers. David Walsh also added that children are valuable to marketers because they represent a large market segment since brand loyalty has become extremely important and establishing it early on is a powerful marketing tool.

According to Dan Acuff, the discussion of consumer culture should not be limited to television as media advertising represents only a portion of all promotion to children. In addition to media purchases, advertisers reach children through promotions, contests, coupons, kids clubs, school relations, and event marketing. He emphasized that children are being reached in numerous places other than television, most notably in schools.

Advertising in schools was a concern raised by both panelists and audience members. In particular, schools giving companies access to children in exchange for free technology was considered particularly problematic, raising concerns about profiling and the effect of ads that are present on the computer screen even when children is only using word processing software. David Walsh expressed concern about the impact of corporate sponsorship on the integrity of schools and principals. He stated, "When corporations start sponsoring activities in schools, then how free is the teacher to start talking about something which might be very antagonistic to the corporate sponsor of that school? Or when corporations start to sponsor curriculum materials, are they unbiased? There are lots of examples that they are not." Robert Reiher concurred with his concerns, adding that because parents are quite receptive to computers, these concerns are heightened.

**DEVELOPMENTAL IMPLICATIONS OF ADVERTISING TO CHILDREN**

Alison Alexander discussed the relationship between exposure to advertising and the adoption of commercial values among children. She noted that a great deal of the research conducted in this area focuses on young children, primarily because this age group is considered the most vulnerable. She described research indicating that preschool-age children have difficulty differentiating between advertisements and television program content and that many misunderstand the persuasive intent of advertisements before age seven or eight. She noted that although by the time children are "tweens" their attitudes toward advertisements have become more cynical, the media continue to be an important source of information about products. At all

ages, exposure to advertising leads to requests for products. She emphasized that while the youngest children lack the abilities to deal with advertising, all children lack marketplace experience. Similarly, Robert Reiher argued that children are so overloaded with entertainment, they are not thinking critically when exposed to advertising.

Alexander also noted that although research has examined comprehension of advertising and its impact on younger children, much less information is available on the impact of advertising on teenagers. Research contradicts teenagers' belief that they are not affected by advertisements. She pointed out that consumer culture becomes even more important in the teen years because "teens are being socialized into the consumer culture. It doesn't start in the teen years but it certainly picks up speed and takes on a lot of importance. That is because rather than buying things for immediate consumption of personal pleasure – toys, candy, sodas – individuals as they begin to enter the consumer culture begin to buy identity and they begin to buy belongingness. They begin to try to use products to place themselves within groups, within social systems and within peer groups. Peers help guide the interpretation of what products are appropriate in what context and image based appeals become very, very important as various groups try to purchase and try to own those things which will make it obvious from what they wear, from what they carry, from what they consume, their music their video their games, what kind of person they are what kind of identity they have."

David Walsh expressed concern about the impact of a cumulative exposure to advertisements. He stated, "I don't think it's a particular ad that might be deceptive, or that might be manipulative. I think the real concern is, What is the cumulative effect of millions and millions of these commercial messages into that mental operating software and setting those expectations?" He noted that television ads do not depict the values many parents wish to instill in their children, such as discipline and moderation. Walsh concluded that advertisements teach individualism and the desire for instant gratification.

Audience member Daniel Anderson, of the University of Massachusetts, remarked that he found measuring materialism in children difficult. Alison Alexander agreed that better measures of materialism and models for the long-term influence of advertising on materialism are needed.

**REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT**

Elizabeth Lascoux described the public and private sector efforts to ensure that advertising that targets children is responsible. At the federal level, sev-

eral regulations guide advertising to children and have severe penalties for failure to comply. In terms of traditional advertising, the Federal Trade Commission has authority over deceptive or unfair advertising to children. The Federal Communications Commission limits the amount of advertising per television hour targeted to children and restricts host selling. However, she noted that the majority of efforts are self-regulatory. She indicated that four screens help to ensure responsible advertising to children: 1) agency/advertiser review; 2) network standards; 3) NAB code authority; and 4) Children's Advertising Review Unit (CARU) of the Better Business Bureau. This self-regulatory system has no enforcement mechanism, except for the bad press that may be generated, and the threat of referral to the FTC or FCC. Lascoutx emphasized, "Most of the advertisers out there really want to do the right thing," and will discontinue ad campaigns that CARU feels are inappropriate for children, despite complying with federal regulations.

Lascoutx added that the Internet represented new challenges. She noted that CARU has attempted to transfer advertising bumpers from television to the Internet, and has developed voluntary guidelines for data collection from children on the Internet. If advertisers fail to comply with these guidelines, they can be referred to the FCC under the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA).

Furthermore, Lascoutx touted critical thinking and media literacy skills as ways to help children learn to live with advertising. David Walsh disagreed, stating that he is not confident that teaching literacy skills will enable children to appropriately handle advertising, particularly when those advertisements appear in schools.

## *MEDIA RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS TO CHILDREN*

### MODERATOR

Kelly L. Schmitt, *Research Fellow, The Annenberg Public Policy Center*

### PANELISTS

Joan Bertin, Esq., *Executive Director, National Coalition Against Censorship*

Dan Gerstein, *Press Secretary, Senator Joe Lieberman, U.S. Senate*

Patti Miller, *Director, Children and the Media Program, Children Now*

James Popham, Esq., *Vice President and General Council, Association of Independent TV Stations*

Kelly L. Schmitt introduced the panelists and indicated that the discussion would focus on balancing media organizations' First Amendment rights and children's needs with regards to media. She noted that the panel would explore the responsibilities of parents, broadcasters, and the government in children's programming.

### RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENTS VERSUS BROADCASTERS



Joan Bertin

The panelists agreed that parents should take some responsibility for what their children are exposed to on television and several believe that parents are not doing enough to monitor their children's TV use. Joan Bertin emphasized that purchasing a television set and allowing a child to watch it and have it in their bedroom are personal choices that parents make, leaving the responsibility for the consequences on them. Dan Gerstein admitted that parents need to do more to monitor their children's viewing and the programs available to them, by taking steps such as complaining to local stations when they feel appropriate programming for children is not being aired. However, he further stated that due to the increasing amounts of media choices for children, it is difficult for parents alone to act as gatekeepers. He argued that broadcasters have an obligation to serve the public interest and he expressed concern that the television industry has lost the ethos that used to govern the material that they aired. Gerstein emphasized that both parents and broadcasters need to be involved to protect children. He stated, "I think there has been and should be a partnership between media producers and media consumers... The problem we're seeing is that both sides are not living up to their responsibilities."

Patti Miller agreed that broadcasters have a responsibility to air appropriate content and that parents need to be involved in their children's TV viewing.



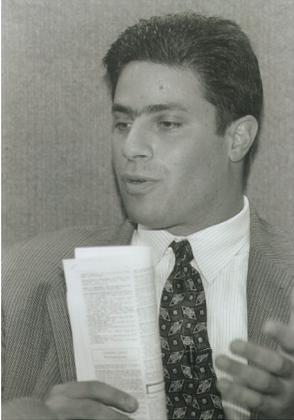
Patti Miller

She also commented that research has shown that parents want and would use a rating system, but are simply unaware of what is available. She argued that further public education of the labels and E/I programming are necessary to help parents do their job. Miller stressed that parents must also be educated about the value of the V-Chip technology, which she felt is needed since children frequently watch in their bedrooms or alone. She noted that Children Now is focusing its efforts on a public education campaign to make parents aware of the program labels that operate with the V-Chip technology.

Audience member Joanne Cantor, of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, argued that parents need more information about the risks of television and speculated that such information would prompt them to do more to regulate their children's viewing. Another audience member, Anne Albright, of the Annenberg School for Communication, worried that parents, particularly those from single parent or two-working parents homes, may not be able to provide all the monitoring and guidance needed for children's television viewing habits.

James Popham emphasized that broadcasters already take several steps to help ensure that programming is suitable for children. He noted that broadcasters follow indecency laws and label programs with the V-Chip ratings, as well as voluntarily edit programs at a local level for language, nudity, and gratuitous violence. However, he expressed dismay that in a competitive environment, where cable and satellites have made numerous channels available, broadcasters continue to receive the most scrutiny when it comes to children's television. He stated, "In the face of this competitive environment, there are a lot of broadcasters at the local level that are functioning as heroes. Not all, but a great part are, in trying to ensure that there are no surprises and that you don't have to look for the holy grail in order to find some good programming."

**THE FIRST AMENDMENT  
AND GOVERNMENT'S ROLE**



Dan Gerstein

The panelists concurred that a tension exists between First Amendment rights and government protection of children from harmful media. However, Joan Bertin argued that the First Amendment limits what the government can do to improve children's television programming. She stated, "The government simply cannot be in charge of making decisions about the ideas and images and other material that are on the public airways." James Popham agreed, saying, "How can you be against more and better choices? That's what everybody wants. But what I am not willing to buy into in order to get more and better choices is accepting government regulation of media content, or the government deciding for me what's good for my kids and what's not." He further warned of the slow eroding of First Amendment rights that will have long term ramifications. According to Dan Gerstein, the government does not want to regulate television, but may need to if broadcasters behave irresponsibly. He noted that the obligations to children's interests are more important than freedom of speech and provided examples of limits to free speech rights such as the indecency standard. Furthermore, Congress can evaluate broadcasters to determine if they deserve licenses if they behave irresponsibly or fail to serve the public interest. Patti Miller felt that it is possible to balance First Amendment rights and children's needs, particularly through policies such as the V-Chip. She argued that regulations such as the V-Chip empower parents, rather than the government, to control children's exposure to content. However, Bertin believes that the ratings are overly simplistic and that the consumer marketplace would work to limit programs that large numbers of people find problematic. Gerstein disagreed: "The market does not reflect the desires of consumers, because there's a lot of parents who want to be able to see things in the privacy of their own home for later hours on television, but don't want that on early in the afternoon when their children are watching."

**IMPACT OF FUTURE  
TECHNOLOGY ON  
POLICIES PROTECTING  
CHILDREN**

Patti Miller expressed concern that no public interest obligations are in place to protect children as the broadcasters make the transition from analog to digital technology. Organizations such as Children Now and People for Better TV are trying to ensure that the Children's Television Act is appropriately applied in the "digital era." Her organization is asking the FCC to translate the Three-Hour Rule in such a way that requires broadcasters to ensure that a minimum of three percent of programming is educational children's programming. She added that the numerous choices now available to children and additional choices likely to become available in the future suggest that such regulations are needed. Moreover, Miller predicted that with the interactivity afforded by new technology, it may be possible to provide information for parents to make better use of current technologies. For example, parents may be able to simply click on the ratings symbol on

the screen to find out more information about the V-Chip and the individual program rating.

## AWARDS CEREMONY

**THE 2000 ANNENBERG  
PUBLIC POLICY CENTER  
AWARD FOR  
DISTINGUISHED  
CONTRIBUTION TO  
CHILDREN AND  
TELEVISION**

*Joan Ganz Cooney, Co-Creator of Sesame Street; Co-Founder of Children's Television Workshop; Chairman, Executive Committee, Sesame Workshop*

Daniel Anderson, Professor of Psychology at the University of Massachusetts and a member of APPC's Advisory Council on Excellence in Children's Media, presented the 2000 Annenberg Public Policy Center Award for Distinguished Contribution to Children and Television to Joan Ganz Cooney. In his introduction of Cooney, Anderson described her vision for *Sesame Street* in the 1960's as "a program that would combine the most advanced television production techniques with the best thinking about children's education and social development. The new program would be designed to successfully compete with entertainment television for the attention of its young audience, while at the same time teaching them important cognitive, academic and social skills." He emphasized that *Sesame Street* has made her vision reality.

*Sesame Street* has been in continuous production for 32 years and is shown in over 140 countries. The program has received over 100 awards, including 76 Emmys. However, Anderson remarked that the more important measure of success is the positive impact that research confirms that the show has had on children. Anderson concluded by saying "Joan, your vision has produced not only an incredibly successful television program and production company, your vision has influenced new generations of television pro-

ducers, and your work has enriched the lives of many millions of children. You have made a difference.”



Dan Anderson presents the APPC Distinguished Contribution to Children Award to Joan Ganz Cooney

Joan Ganz Cooney began her acceptance speech by contrasting the different media environments available to children now and during the time when *Sesame Street* was created. She stated that today children are influenced by many media, a reality reflected in the decision to change the name of the Children’s Television Workshop to Sesame Workshop. Cooney reminisced that when she started developing *Sesame Street*, television was the dominant medium in children’s lives, yet only one quality program, *Captain Kangaroo*, was available to children. “Unlike today, the wasteland was so vast, and the yearning for something better so great, that it would have been inexplicable had *Sesame Street* not been a hit. But none of us had any idea that *Sesame Street* and Sesame Workshop would grow into the international institutions that they are today.”

In her remarks, Cooney stressed the central role that research played in determining how to use the medium of television to benefit children. She

urged creators and producers of content to apply the same research efforts to computers and the Internet. She argued that although many parents are buying computers for their children for educational purposes, little evidence has assessed whether or not programming delivered through these media offer anything of real and lasting value to children. She concluded: "If we have learned anything from the *Sesame Street* experience, it is that it takes research to divine how media can be most beneficial to kids. The media themselves are neither inherently good nor bad. So we need to encourage funding from private and public sources to carry out this research so that these new media are harnessed, not merely to entertain and to market, but to provide our children with experiences and knowledge to help them achieve their highest potential."

**APPC AWARD FOR  
OUTSTANDING  
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM  
ON A COMMERCIAL  
BROADCAST STATION**

*Disney's Doug, Executive Producers, Jim Jinkins and David Campbell, Jumbo Pictures*

The APPC Award for Outstanding Educational Program on a Commercial Broadcast Station recognizes commercial broadcasters' efforts to provide high quality educational children's programming. Sandra Calvert, Professor of Psychology at Georgetown University and a member of the APPC Advisory Panel on Educational Television, presented the 2000 APPC Award for Outstanding Educational Program on a Commercial Broadcast Station to *Disney's Doug*.

Calvert showed a clip of the program and praised it for meeting the Children's Television Act's mandate for educational television for children by teaching children socially valued skills through well-written, engaging stories. She stated, "*Doug* is the story of a boy who has been writing in his diary for many years now. He has become a familiar voice to millions of children

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## AWARDS CEREMONY

as they explore what it means, and how it feels to grow up, and to be young, and to struggle with the problems of youth.”



Sandra Calvert presents the APPC Award for Outstanding Educational Program to Jim Jenkins and David Campbell for Disney's *Doug*.

The award was accepted by David Campbell and Jim Jenkins, Executive Producers of *Disney's Doug*. In accepting the award, Campbell noted that he and Jim were fortunate to have been working in the field at a time when there was “an explosion of original programs in cable television and in children’s programming.” He noted that in the early 1990’s, *Doug’s* survival was not a certainty, “so it’s very gratifying ten years later to share a moment of success with *Doug*.” In his remarks, Jim Jenkins explained that *Doug* was inspired by his own childhood memories, as well as the desire to tell stories that would matter to children. Jenkins also described how his professional career was shaped through working at Nickelodeon and Children’s Television Workshop. He expressed his thanks to these organizations and other creators of quality children’s programming in concluding: “I want to thank all of you for helping to prepare me to try to get it right, try to make TV that really is important and valuable to kids and their family. So this award means a ton to me, and I thank you so much for it. And we’ll try to even do better in the future.”