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New Media & Young Children

The biggest things that stood out to me in these chapters from Little eLit's *Young Children, New Media, and Libraries: A Guide for Incorporating New Media into Library Collections, Services, and Programs for Families and Children Ages 0-5* would be the focus on potential for touch technology as opposed to passive screen watching (like television) and the digital divide between advantaged and disadvantaged families.

Last semester I took a half course in Media Literacy and Youth and it was interesting to see the overlap of ideas in the discussions and readings of that course and what was discussed in these chapters. For instance, the effect of passive vs. interactive media, such as watching television as opposed to playing video games, and its impact the development of literacy and growth in children and young adults was interesting to discuss. It seemed like the knee-jerk reaction for many people was that technology in the form of games and television had to be bad for youth and often they ignore the potential benefits of interactive applications and touch technology. What was nice to find in the readings was that parents actually feel differently. As Pendergast stated, "A recent study about parent perceptions of their children's digital media use suggests that parents generally are in favor of their children's use of technology for both learning and fun, and they are sure that their children are benefiting from the time they spend using them (Vittrup, Snider, Rose, & Rippy, 2014)," which contrasted sharply with the recommended time and use prescribed by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Parents, on the whole, are actually enthusiastic about the use of current technology and learning and can see how it benefits their children, despite the stigma against screens and children. Much of this has

to do with the fact that, as the readings reiterate, the newest forms of technology are just that--new. Touch technology in the form of the iPad has only been around for a few years--not enough time for intensive or comprehensive studies on the effects, benefits, and detriments of their use in connection to child development. Unlike television which is mostly passive viewing, interactive games and instantly responding tech like iPads may prove to be a great additive tool for child development, especially in this highly technologically growing world.

In the second chapter, Tess Prendergast references an article by Karen Wohlwend, "A is for Avatar," in which "Wohlwend confronts the spectre of the 'natural child' and discusses how this idealized notion of childhood distances young children from access to digital technologies that constitute our modern literacies (p. 146)." This really resonated with me. I come from a poor, underprivileged background where we had little to no access to computers or technology until I was in high school. While growing up with practically no adult supervision in a wooded, rural area of Oklahoma afforded me free access to exploring nature and learning science "naturally," being removed from modern technology set me at a major disadvantage in school. I wasn't able to print out papers, I had no internet, and since the nearest library was 30 miles away and no one would drive me, research was nearly impossible to complete. Thankfully, in high school, my brother and I learned how to build computers (mostly to play video games) and we were able to find cheaper ways to keep up with modern technology so we could succeed not only in high school, but also in college and beyond. I feel very envious of my cousins children who get to grow up playing with iPads and Kindle Fires and get that exposure to technology very early on.

For children who grow up in a low socio-economic setting, access to technology during childhood can make a major difference in how they'll succeed once they grow up and enter the high tech workforce of today. Children who grow up around computers, tablets, gadgets, and video games will have a major advantage over those who don't. As Pendergast states in her review of the studies and literature on the topic, "Most interestingly, this study suggests that

having digital technology in the home might offer “a route into reading” for children of lower socioeconomic status. The study found that economically disadvantaged three- to five-year-olds who had touch screens at home were twice as likely to look at stories daily compared to similar status children without touch screens at home. Furthermore, disadvantaged children who had access to both traditional and digital stories fared better on early literacy measures than their counterparts who had only interacted with traditional print stories”(2). For librarians, this means that giving children an equal, free access and exposure to technology even at very young ages is important and, if possible, a goal for us to address.

Works Cited

Campbell, Cen, et al. *Young Children, New Media, and Libraries: A Guide for Incorporating New Media into Library Collections, Services, and Programs for Families and Children Ages 0-5*.

<http://littleelit.com/book/>