

Cecilia von Feilitzen and Ulla Carlsson (eds.)

Children and Media: Image, Education and Participation.

Children and Media Violence Yearbook 1999.

Goeteborg: The UNESCO International Clearing House on Children and Violence on the Screen. 1999. 483pp. US\$30 (pbk).

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When this review appears in this Journal, another three new volumes of the Yearbook should have been published - so, what's the point to review it? My aim here is to position the 1999 Yearbook in the movement for the promotion of children's rights in and beyond the mediated environment. It is a welcome addition to the knowledge foundation for the advancement of children's rights in a highly contested media environment: children are increasingly socially nurtured by the mediated representations of differences – exposure to excessive violence and sex is just the tip of the iceberg.

This Yearbook series is another innovative attempt by the UNESCO International Clearing House on Children and Violence on the Screen. Following the first Yearbook's attempt to summarize major research findings and to lay out an agenda for action on children's rights in/through the media in general, children and media violence in particular, the 2nd volume (1999) contributes to these actions, involvement of the stakeholders in media education and the active role of children in the media. It addresses four different yet inter-related themes/aspects of reality and is organized along them: children's access to media and media use (3 chapters), the image of the child in the media (6 chapters), media education (7 chapters) that can promote children's rights and welfare, and children's participation in the media (21 chapters). The intention of this edited volume is to motivate readers to examine the subject matter from both an academic/policy research perspective and to instigate social mobilization. But the emphasis is heavily unbalanced in that country/case specific project reportage outnumbers academic/analytical research.

The book ends with two very informative sections on, respectively, the international and regional declarations and resolutions on children and media, and the related organizations and networks and their Internet addresses – the twin part is particularly useful for researchers and children rights activists/organizations.

Given the breadth of the issues covered in this Yearbook and the related innovative analysis, new perspectives, and the action-oriented advocacies, it can clearly achieve the aim of the Clearinghouse to increase awareness and knowledge about children and media violence, not least in view of the newer channels of communication such as satellite television and Internet, thereby providing a basis for relevant policy-making and contributing to a constructive public debate.

This 483-page volume with over 40 chapters is good value for money and should stimulate further research on children and the media. However, it is less obviously useful to enhance children's competence as users of the media, as nearly half of the reportage in this section is only short (2-4 pages) and provides nothing but descriptive summaries of project-based intervention and/or action research. Most of the papers highlight the success rather than analyzing the factors contributing to 'best practice'. Perhaps, the anatomy of the failure cases, coupling the position of the difficulties encountered, could provide a better, alternative schema for thought. Furthermore, for the speedy dissemination of these success stories or best practice, posting all these short summaries on the Clearinghouse's website should be considered in future – which would also

downsize this printed volume for the sake of the environment! At the same time, this Yearbook series could serve a better purpose if more analytically researched works were documented, whilst the Clearinghouse's website at [http://www.clearinghouse.org](#) could serve as a platform for exchange and interaction on the most current issues and pro-active interventions, such as, for instance, Yahoo!'s attempts to ban all pornographic up/download from it network – then, the Clearinghouse will become an important source for global and local action for the promotion of children's rights, combating gratuitous media violence. This is obviously a worthwhile goal!