Children and media in Out of School Hours Care
A practical resource for service and program planning

Dr. Karen Orr Vered
Flinders University

for

Department of Educatio
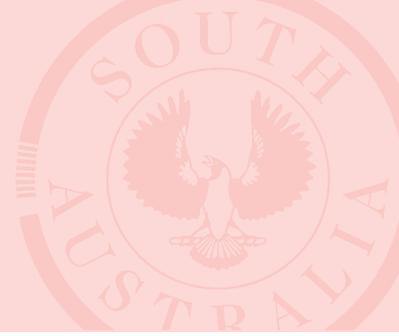Children's Services
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Acknowledgements

Findings from a SA study into Media Use in Out of School Hours Care (OSHC)

Background to this Publication

The information reported here is based on a three-year study funded in part by the Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS, South Australia), the Out of School Hours Care Association of South Australia and Flinders University. The research was conducted by the author, Dr. Karen Orr Vered, with research assistance from Ms. Aanya Roenfeldt and Mr. Danny Wattin. Aanya Roenfeldt is now a practicing artist living in New South Wales and Danny Wattin is a published novelist and journalist living in Sweden.

Six Out of School Hours Care Services participated in this study. Qualitative methods with a child-centred approach were used to discover how children's media play is situated among other media practices and other play, and how their media competency develops across the spaces of home, classroom and Out of School Hours Care. We sought to include services of varying sizes, catering to different socioeconomic strata. All the services selected are in the greater metropolitan area of Adelaide, the capital city of South Australia. One service was selected because media production (video making) was part of its program. With approval from the ethics committees of both DECS and Flinders University, children and staff were observed and interviewed at the six services. Regional and rural sites were not included in the study because conducting research in these areas was beyond the financial means of the project.[1] Research for this resource focussed on the after-school care component of Out of School Hours Care Services. Each of these services also operates a Before School Care and Vacation Care program and information about those services also inform our overall understanding.

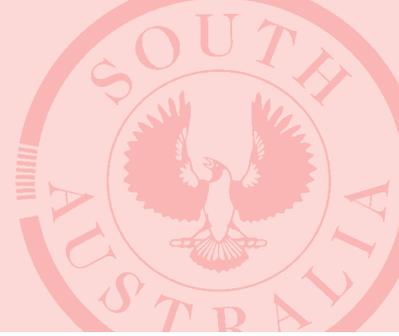## Media Use in Out of School Hours Care (OSHC)

Media play is among the most popular activities in OSHC. Most OSHC services have a combination of electronic technologies that support children's play and learning. Television, music, video games and computers provide entertainment and educational opportunities that children enjoy alongside and in combination with other activities like playground play, dancing, craft, and creative production. This resource is designed to help service staff and management make the most of electronic entertainment and information technologies and the social interactions that they support while balancing the interests of children and their families.

Childhood today is experienced quite differently from what many adults recall of their younger days. Many children have more material goods than previous generations and our society, overall, is enriched by cultural goods that come to us in the form of entertainment media, like television, movies and digital games. As a marker of how saturated our lives are with technology and media, in 2006 it is estimated that 94% of Australians use mobile phones, 100% of households have at least one television, and as far back as 1997 the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that nearly half of our "free time" is spent engaged with audio visual media.

The experience of childhood though, is not only shaped by material and cultural goods. The social networks in which children live are also changing, especially the nuclear family. Many children now are raised in single parent homes, in shared parenting arrangements between two homes, and in two-parent families where both parents work. All of these arrangements are quite different to the Australia of even thirty years ago. In this mix of social and material change, Out of School Hours Care is a critical service that helps families achieve a balance between contemporary work and home life.

But how is Out of School Hours Care managing media? If entertainment media and communication technology are increasingly important to adult lives, then we can expect that they are also becoming central to the rhythms of children's lives.

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[1] It is recommended that research be conducted in rural and regional areas to determine the recreational use patterns of media in OSHC for these communities. Their resources and needs may be different to what we have found for services in metropolitan areas.

The following remarks are from one of many studies showing that children acquire their media and information technology skills in a variety of places in addition to school classrooms. Many of those out of school experiences are critical to supporting the learning that goes on in classrooms.

> - *Learning occurs not only in classrooms but, equally in environments like home*
> - *Most children acquire their basic computing skills at home*
> - *Children from low-income backgrounds are less likely to have access to information technologies at home*
> - *Classroom learning is best when supported by opportunities outside the classroom*
> - *There is a significant link between students' information technology skills, confidence and enjoyment, their use of computers outside of school, the level of resources in their homes, and their personal ownership of resources*
>
> (Real Time: Computers, Change and Schooling,1999)

But, some adults are uncomfortable with the type and amount of media that children use in recreation and leisure. Common concerns include questions like, Is media play harmful to children or is it merely passive entertainment (and is this something to worry about as well)? Can media play be structured to provide benefits to children? How do Out of School Hours Care Services select media hardware and software? How can we ensure that all children get equal access to the highly desirable experiences of media play? In the following pages you will find out how to best support and encourage children's positive and productive media use in Out of School Hours Care Services.

The strategies suggested here support the aims of Quality Assurance as recommended in the OSHCQA Handbook (2005) issued by the National Childcare Accreditation Council.

> *The broad objective of the OSHCQA is to ensure that children in outside school hours care have stimulating, positive experiences and interactions that foster their self-esteem and confidence.* (2005:3)

Quality Area 5: Play and Development is most relevant for consideration and evaluation of media use and media play. Media play and use address all four principles for this Quality Area:

> P5.1: Programs encourage children to initiate and participate in play and recreational experiences.
>
> P5.2: Programs support physical development.
>
> P5.3: Programs support the development of life skills.
>
> P5.4: Programs support creative and aesthetic development.

The structure of media play and media use, however, should also be considered in terms of **Quality Area 4: Programming and Evaluation**. Principles 4.1 and 4.2 address concepts that are inseparable from the aims of Quality Assurance in Play and Development.

> P4.1: Programs reflect a clear statement of service philosophy and a related set of service goals.
>
> P4.2 Programming caters for the needs, interests and abilities of all children.

Without a clearly stated philosophy on media use and media play, it is unlikely that a media program will be well-planned. If it is not well-planned, it runs the risk of missing opportunities to support children's development across a range of areas. The Quality Assurance Areas and Principles provide a grid that can be useful in assessing and developing programs of high quality.

This resource is designed in four parts.
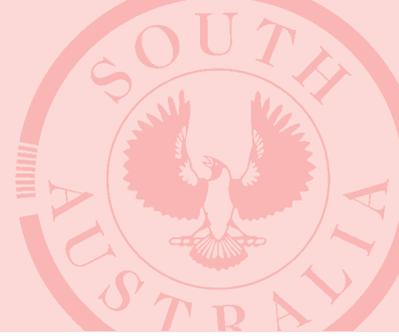
Part I   explains why entertainment and communication technologies are important to children's leisure and play and how these activities are integrated with learning in general.

Part II   outlines the media landscape in OSHC and provides a set of Media Assessment Tasks that will help you understand and analyse the media provision and use in your service.

Part III   outlines key steps to Media Management and Media Integration in Programming for OSHC services. The aim is to generate positive and productive media use among children's leisure activities.

Part IV   lists a range of resources that services can consult for building media programmes and activities. (Be advised, many resources are on the Internet and they may change with time. We recommend these resources and organizations at the time of publication.)
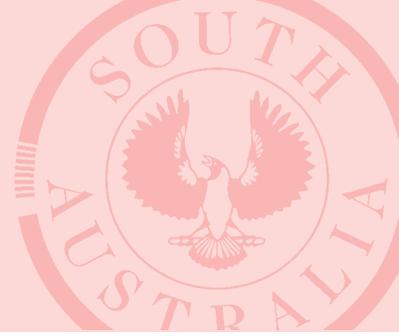
Until now, what researchers know about children and their media use has come from two sources: studies about media use in family homes and studies about media use in school classrooms. With Out of School Hours Care becoming an ever more important place in children's everyday lives, it makes sense that we should find out what contribution media makes to these environments and what children do with media in these spaces. What most adults believe about media, for themselves and for their children, is based on second-hand reports and lay interpretations of research, mainly reported in abbreviated forms in newspapers and magazines. We also have anecdotal knowledge, the casual and happenstance observation of your own child or others, or yourself and your peers. This type of information, however, does not form reliable scientific knowledge. So what do we know about children and their media practices?

While several scientific studies have looked at children's media use at home and in classrooms, the increasingly important spaces of childcare services have been ignored. Similar to findings from studies in Great Britain, Europe, and North America, two major studies of Australian children's media use have identified a need to account for children's media use *outside* the well-studied sites of home and classroom, because, as the opening remarks make clear, classroom learning is supported, reinforced and enhanced by experiences outside of school.[2] OSHC is one of the most important of these sites because it is an everyday and informal, leisure-time environment and, unlike similar services in the US and UK, media play is a common activity in OSHC and it is among the most popular with children. Although the Australian school system shares aspects of both the US and UK systems, OSHC, as part of childcare services, is more similar to childcare provisions for school aged children in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark.[3] Moreover, attitudes toward children's media use for entertainment and recreation appear to be more closely aligned with views in Northern Europe than they are with attitudes in the US and UK. In the US and UK recreational media are often demeaned as useless while in Australia and Northern Europe they are often seen as significant elements of contemporary childhood, play and recreation. Australian OSHC is a particularly interesting location for the study of children's recreational media use outside the home and classroom.

What's so Important about Media Use in OSHC?

Children's culture, and particularly the ways in which they play with entertainment media, information communication technologies (ICT), and their associated story worlds, contribute to shaping their media practices in the present, and probably for the future as well. If we want to contribute to the shaping of a child's media competency, we need to recognise that their media play is part of the process. Although classroom media literacy curricula are important, by the time a child reaches school, s/he already has acquired considerable competency with many media practices, mainly in the realm of entertainment and recreation, precisely the activities that are central to OSHC. Ultimately, media play in recreational environments, like the home or OSHC, articulates with more serious uses of media in other arenas, like schooling and work. What children do with media in play has consequences for their more serious uses of media. Moreover, the skills that children acquire in play with, for instance, video games, can support and complement their use of computers. Between spaces and across media platforms, a child's overall media competency is formed from experiences that occur in classrooms, homes, and intermediary spaces like OSHC. Media competency is acquired across a lifetime, in a variety of circumstances and well before entering a classroom or being exposed to formal curriculum and instruction.

Children's media competencies, as social practices, are not framed by television, computer or video screens but are actively shaped and constructed within the different spaces that children regularly occupy. These spaces are

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[2] Office of Film and Literature Classification, "Computer Games and Australians Today," Canberrra: 1999, and Denise Meredyth, et al., "Real Time: Computers, Change and Schooling," Brisbane: Australian Key Centre for Cultural and Media Policy, 1999. For information on what children in the US are doing with media, see the Kaiser Family Foundation's report, "Kids & Media @ the New Millennium," http://www.kff.org/content/1999/1535. For a look at European children and media use, see, *Children and Their Changing Media Environment*, edited by Sonia Livingstone and Moira Bovill, London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001. On Australian children and the Internet see, Australian Broadcasting Authority,"Kidsonline@home: Internet use in Austrlaian Homes," 2005.

[3] Deborah Brennan characterises Australian childcare, along with Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish, as "instances of 'maximum public responsibility,' while Britain and the United States exemplify the trend of 'maximum private responsibility.'" *The Politics of Australian Child Care: Philanthropy to Feminism and Beyond*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998): p.1.
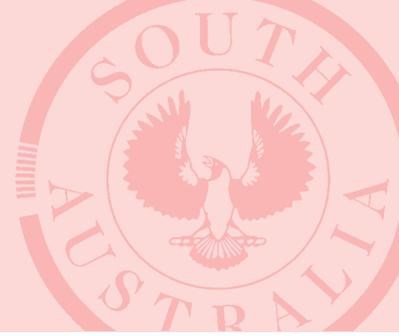
not technical or physical spaces but are social spaces. As social spaces they are more complex, with ideological, institutional, and cultural dimensions.

> *Knowledge of media resides in the child whose body migrates across and between social spaces.*

In order to understand and contribute to a child's media competency and acquisition of media skills, we need to recognise and value the informal learning that goes on around media play. Similar to the way in which a child's print literacy is commonly developed before entering school and outside the classroom, our knowledge, skills and habits of media, our media competency, is developed through a range of experiences that take place in many different spaces. Thinking about media skills as media competency directs us to value the informal learning that goes on at home, in play environments, through peer groups, and across a lifetime.

OSHC is a third place in children's lives and it is a place that mediates between home and classroom. It provides a bridge between the two places of home and classroom and yet is distinct to each of these places. As it turns out, children's media use in OSHC is quite different from what they do in classrooms and at home, because as a social space, OSHC is quite different to both of these other important domains. Media use and media play in OSHC have many positive qualities that are worth supporting and encouraging. An important aim here is to guide and assist children to become responsibly self-monitoring, self-regulating agents, who are happy and confident with their media consumption and production practices.

Key Characteristics of Media Play in OSHC

Media use in OSHC is:

1. Restricted and limited due to resource pressures
2. Social & Collaborative
3. Leisurely and Playful
4. Creative
5. Peer-regulated and Public
6. Supports Equity in Access

1 Restricted and Limited Due to Resource Pressures

One of the key characteristics of **media use in OSHC is that it is** *restricted and limited due to resource pressures*. That is to say, most OSHC services have one or two television sets and a variety of media are screened through them. Free-to-air television, video game play, and videotape playback are all dependent on the same screen – the TV set. When a service has one television set, the amount of time that any one of these devices can be in play is limited. The television set may be used for games during part of the session and for free-to-air television during another period of the session. The demand placed on the resource of a single television set generates a sort of "natural" scarcity, or limitation. Video games and television cannot be in play at the same time, if there is only one TV. Similarly, most services have only one CD or music player and in many services access to computers is limited to certain days of the week.

Media resources are also restricted in OSHC due to their popularity. Media are among the most popular activities and playthings in OSHC. In order to ensure that everyone has access to these resources, individual turn length and the amount of time that each medium is in use are limited. To play video games and watch television in one session requires that both media will be in play for only a portion of the session. That is to say, in any given 3-hour OSHC session, across the range of video tape, free-to-air television and video games, it is unlikely that any one of these will be in use for even an hour.

2 Social and Collaborative

The fact that media resources are limited has also generated certain social patterns of use that are unique to OSHC and positive for children's social and technical learning. **Most media use in OSHC** *is social and collaborative*. Research indicates that children's media competency is encouraged by collaborative use and through social interaction around media. Children learn from each other and monitor and regulate each other's activities. The ideal arrangement for classroom use of computers, for instance, is to have two or three children sharing one computer and working together on applications. In most schools, however, economics have dictated that a computer laboratory is the norm. In these settings children often work independently and do not have daily access. Similarly, in most family homes, children use computers and video games alone. In many homes, children are increasingly using computers in their
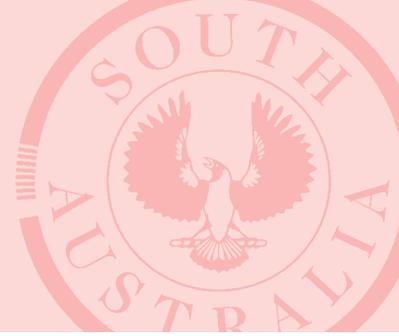
own bedrooms, away from the social interaction and observation of others. Collaborative and social use of computers and video games is more likely to occur in OSHC than it is in homes or classrooms simply because there are more children using fewer resources. While resources are limited, children use these resources in pairs or groups. Individual use is an unlikely option at OSHC and this restriction supports collaboration.

3   Leisurely and Playful

Like most activities at OSHC, **children's media use in OSHC** *is leisurely and playful*. In this respect, media use at OSHC is more like media use at home than in classrooms and it offers the benefits that research has shown for use at home. Classroom or school media use is most often linked to learning goals and the aim is for children to reach certain goals that have been set by curriculum frameworks and lesson plans. Because OSHC is organised to provide a safe leisure environment for children, they are allowed to use media in playful and open ways, not necessarily directed by adults. This attitude allows children to explore, play, and be creative with media in ways that schools do not always have the luxury to offer. The child-centred and child-directed activity of OSHC encourages an independence in media use that is not marked by individual use but is instead characterised by children's interests. Class time and computer lab time are precious at school and these features influence children's computer use at school. At home, some children are able to use the computer in the leisurely fashion that allows independent exploration and practice. If a child does not have a computer at home or does not have the same software that the school has, his/her opportunity to practice and extend the classroom learning at a leisurely pace is compromised. When OSHC services provide access to the school's computing resources, they give children time and space to pursue their computer learning through recreational activity and at a leisurely pace. It also supports children in independent learning that is not related at all to classroom lessons and this too can be valuable.

4   Creative

Media use in OSHC *is creative because it is leisurely, playful, social, and collaborative*. The orientation to leisure and play allows children to use television, video playback, music, video games and computers as toys and playthings. Whether it's video games, music, television or computers, children's media use in OSHC is often creative. Children create their own stories and games based on other media. They draw and write with computer tools and, when given the opportunity and support, they can even make movies and games similar to the commercially available ones that they find so appealing. There are many ways to extend media use in play for creativity and learning. Research also shows that as children grow older, their creative uses of computers declines as they begin to use them more for information retrieval.

5   Peer-regulated and Public

The public nature of media use in OSHC also encourages peer-regulation of media. Public view ensures a certain amount of tacit regulation. Children are more likely to use media in the appropriate and acceptable ways when they know their actions are open to peer and public scrutiny.

Media use in OSHC is public. Unlike many family homes, at OSHC children must use media in public view of peers and adults. The public nature of OSHC media use has many benefits for children and adults. Since media use in OSHC is readily observed, collaboration is invited. Children often join in with others because the setting encourages social play in all activities. The public nature of media use in OSHC also encourages more open discussion and criticism of media, something that children enjoy but don't often get to participate in.

6   Supports Equity in Access

For some children, OSHC provides important recreational access to computers that they do not have elsewhere. This can be important for girls because research shows that girls tend to acquire their advanced computer skills at home and if they do not have access at home, they are likely not to develop these essential skills.

Most importantly such access helps to reduce the gap between the "technology-haves" and "have-nots" or the technology rich and technology poor. OSHC helps ensure equity with respect to recreational access to computing.

Benefits of Media Play in OSHC

Children receive many benefits from the media access that they enjoy at OSHC.

- Entertainment media cannot be separated from serious communication technologies because they increasingly share common hardware and software infrastructures

- Media play has consequences for more serious uses of media in the present and future

- Informal learning that goes on in OSHC has consequences for all media use

- Media use at OSHC is more supervised than media use in many family homes

- Children learn problem solving skills through play, including media play

- Children gain important opportunities to use media independently and with peers as they move toward self-management of their media use

- Children gain confidence with media through play and that confidence is necessary for more sophisticated uses of media and communication technologies[4]

How OSHC makes a positive contribution to children's acquisition of media competency is addressed in the next section.

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[4] "Computer Games and Australians Today," Canberra: 1999.

The Serious and Silly:
Computers and other Media in OSHC

Adults often think of television and the movies as diversions while they consider computers to be important tools. We even call certain software applications, "productivity tools" and we don't often say, "I'm just playing on the computer." But children don't always share our values or our views. Children take their play and their entertainment very seriously – conflict and disputes often erupt over game rules and turns at games. Children also often approach the computer as if it were a toy and not the tool that adults perceive it to be. Children's attitudes toward entertainment media and information technologies demonstrate that the distinctions we apply to media are not firm but are rather porous. Moreover, the values we ascribe to media are not intrinsic to the media but are learned and acquired in time; children often value media differently than adults. Children's understanding and use of media also recognise and capitalise on the power of intermedia relations.

Intermedia relations are the ways in which the different media of television, computer, video game console, music, movies and so forth, are related to one another. They are often related economically in terms of corporate ownership. Disney, for example, owns several companies related to movies, Walt Disney Pictures, Touchstone Pictures, Hollywood Pictures, Miramax Films, Buena Vista Home Entertainment and Pixar. They also own several free-to-air television and radio stations in the USA and cable TV channels which have international reach, like Disney Channel, ESPN, E! and A&E. They own publishing houses, like Hyperion Books for Children, and music companies like Buena Vista Music Group. They own toy shops like The Disney Store and The Baby Einstein Company, and, of course, the well-known theme parks. Disney has its hand in all sorts of media and they license their intellectual property (their ideas) across the range of media. A Disney movie will be accompanied by complementary toys, books, clothing, music, interactive games, and sometimes even food products from the same story line. These are all examples of product licensing and the existence of one character or story world across a range of media forms can be described as inter-media relations.

That same quality that allows Disney to realise an idea across a range of media is also available to individual consumers. Children do not always play with toys as they are "meant to be" used. Children take characters, stories and story ideas from television and other narrative media and apply them in their own imaginative play.

They may see a cartoon on television and then go off to draw their favourite character with paper and pen or on the computer. They take characters from films, books and television and create physical play scenarios in which they embody these characters and perform stories that they know already or make up new ones as they go. Children play with media in many creative ways. Providing a range of media means that they have access to more play materials in the form of stories and that they can create stories for different media. This is also what is meant when we say that the meanings of media are not framed by the screen on which they appear. The meanings of media are contextualised in play and play is what children do with media. What does this mean for OSHC and provision of media?

Media Landscapes in OSHC

Most OSHC services have a television and a video player or DVD player. Many also have one or another video game platform like Nintendo or Playstation. Many have CD players and computers. Some even have personal technologies like GameBoy. We can group these media as follows:

TV & Video/DVD

Game Platforms (Playstation, Nintendo)

Radio/CD player

Computers (and printers, scanners, etc.)

Personal Technologies (GameBoy, mobile phones)

Importantly, these are the same media found in family homes; they are not, however, all found in classrooms.

Classrooms do not utilise TV and video/DVD to the same purposes as OSHC. TV and video/DVD in classrooms is very limited, often used to illustrate a concept or as a reward. Classrooms do not have video games because video games are not deemed educational. Computers are often segregated in the computer lab and not available on demand in classrooms. Personal technologies for learning are rarely found in classrooms because they are emergent (new) media and they have not yet been integrated into curricular activities. Personal technologies for children's personal use are becoming more common but also more restricted as children are asked not to use mobile phones during school hours for a variety of reasons. Curriculum for use of personal

 Children and Media in Out of School Hours Care

digital assistants is only in its earliest, experimental stages and is most prevalent in places like Silicon Valley where the computing is the dominant industry or in places where research and higher education is a main economic pillar.

But that is the hardware. What about the software? What content is available to children in OSHC? Where do the movies come from when they are shown in OSHC? Who chooses the movies that are shown in OSHC? Which television shows are watched in OSHC? What video games are played in OSHC? What are the habits and practices around use of these different media in OSHC?

These questions are all important to drawing a picture of the media landscape in OSHC. Hardware (what technologies we have) and software (the content) considerations are both important contributors to the media landscape in OSHC.

Even though most services have basically the same media (TV, video, video games, and some sort of computer access), children's play habits around media are different from place to place. When talking about our television use, we usually say that we "watch TV" and when we talk about video game use, we call it "playing video games." The way we speak about these activities tends to simplify very complex activities and relationships with and through media. There are a lot of ways to watch television and to play video games and children in OSHC demonstrate a wide range of media practices. What influences how children use media in OSHC?

Three fundamental factors shaping media use in OSHC:

- **media provision (hardware and software)**
- **use of space (where media are located)**
- **regulatory schemes (rules about use)**

In the following pages several different types of media activities are discussed and for each there is a Media Assessment Task that asks you to reflect on the media practices in your service. To complete each Assessment Task, you will need to conduct some serious observation of media use in your service. Set aside time one week to observe the use of each medium. After you have observed for a week, answer the questions for that medium. If you need to do some further observation to answer the questions, take the time to do this research and complete the assessment at a pace that suits your schedule.

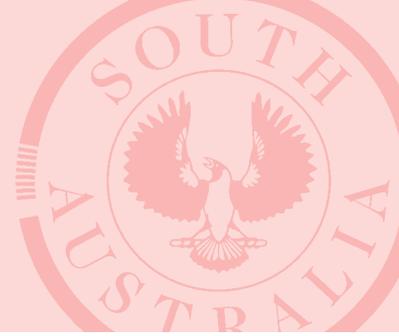## Assessing Media Provision & Use Patterns

Television

Despite the fact that TV may now be considered "old media," the television provides the most important screen in OSHC. The television set is essential to the delivery of video games, video playback, and broadcast TV programming (free-to-air). With only one television set, video playback, video games, and free-to-air television must be screened in alternation. For instance, a service with one set might offer video game play from 3:30 to 4:30, then screen a movie from videotape or DVD from 4:30 to 5:30, and conclude the last hour of the day with free-to-air television. Scarcity of hardware resources, like having only one TV set, drives the scheduling and alternation of media use and it has proven to be an effective system for managing media access. Alternation of video playback, video game play, and TV is the method preferred by most services. The most common pattern of media scheduling is to offer broadcast television only in the late afternoon, and the children think this is an acceptable practice. While the TV set is critical to so much media use in OSHC, viewing television programmes is very limited.

MEDIA ASSESSMENT TASK –

Television

For your service, answer the following questions about television:

1. For what period of time is free-to-air television available to children?

2. What programmes are available?

3. Who selects these programmes?

4. Why have these programmes been selected?

5. What other activities accompany television viewing? (What else is going on at this time?)

6. How is the television viewing space arranged? (furnishings, space, rug)

7. What are the children doing while "watching" television?

Assessing Media Provision & Use Patterns

Video Playback

Most services also have a video player or DVD player on which they can screen movies or other recorded material. How children interact with this material is based on the selection of titles they have available to them (the content), the space provided to enjoy the video or DVD, and the rules that services maintain around use.

When children have a large, open space in which to view the screen, they may perform along with the screen entertainment, enacting scenes or dancing with the music. If they have a small and cosy space, they will be more inclined to recline and watch the screen with less physical activity. If the space is confined or cramped, they may not be comfortable enough to watch an entire movie or they may be bothersome to one another. Space is critical for activities that adults may think are quite sedentary.

Another surprisingly important factor that influences children's pleasure in viewing movies on DVD and video is whether or not they can replay parts that they like. Allowing children autonomy in viewing is important. First of all the technology is designed for such autonomous decision-making (to replay a favourite part). Secondly, children like to review favourite scenes for much the same reasons that they like to hear a story repeatedly. Thirdly, allowing children autonomy over viewing acknowledges and respects their taste and preferences in viewing. It allows them to engage in the diversity of media use that is possible. When children use media in ways that are different to adult use patterns, it is not necessarily incorrect, it's just different and very often creative.

MEDIA ASSESSMENT TASK –

DVD & Video Playback

For your service, answer the following questions about playback:

1. Where is the DVD/video player situated? Describe the space.

2. Is there any furniture and does it suit the way children are using playback?

3. Is the space sufficient for children to move about and still view the screen?

4. How many children can comfortably view a movie?

5. Are the children allowed to turn the player off and on and replay scenes?

6. What type of content does your service show on video or DVD?

7. Who selects the content? What is the process for selection? Criteria?

8. Does the service maintain a collection? Who keeps it up to date with new materials? How are new selections made?

9. Where is the library or collection kept and who has access to it?

10. When are children allowed to use the DVD/Video system?

Assessing Media Provision & Use Patterns

Video Games

Video games have been central to the OSHC media mix for some time now. When research was conducted for this resource (2000-2003) video games were the most popular media at OSHC. We would often see large groups of children gathered around playing and watching each other play games. We rarely saw such numbers crowd around the screen for television or a movie. The biggest challenge that video games posed for services was to regulate turn taking and turn length. Again, because demand was so high and resources limited (most services having only one game machine) games were in constant demand. Couple this with the fact that video games are designed to be time consuming (it takes

a long time to complete a game) and the demand is increased. The challenge was to find a way to give each child a long enough turn that they would progress in game play to some satisfaction.

Several "systems" emerged through what we might call an organic process – they grew out of the social context and its restrictions. Some features of video game playing at OSHC are:

● Children play in pairs and groups

● While waiting for a turn, children act as spectators and coaches

● Time limits apply to turns

● Rosters help players take turns in sequence

● Mini games and platform games are good value

On any given day more children may want to play video games than there is time in the afternoon, so time limits are essential. If each turn is ten minutes long, not counting setting up the gear, changing cartridges and so forth, a child can have a pleasurable experience that is extended in time by the option to watch others play and to assist others in play from the sidelines. Ensuring time limits are kept is not easy but a large wall clock near by is a good support mechanism. Another option is the use of an egg-timer but this often requires adult assistance. Some services have gone through several egg-timers as they can mysteriously suffer damage. Staff may have to teach the children to keep to the time limits by intervening when time limits are not kept. Younger children often need assistance with time keeping, especially if they do not know how to tell time. A stop-watch is also an option and one on a cord that hangs around the neck is a good option. Having children take turns at being time-keeper each day is helpful. Some games also have internal time-keeping mechanisms. Find this feature and demonstrate to the children how to access it.

Another feature of turn taking is following a roster so that each child has a turn. Several systems are used by services but some have more success than others. It is difficult to keep track of turns through the week because this requires adults to keep an ongoing roster, which may present a filing challenge. A daily roster on a white board or chalkboard offers good monitoring because it can be seen from a distance by children and adults. Staff can also make a paper roster sheet that has time blocks noted and a space for the child to write down his/her name next to the time block. These sheets can be kept by staff for review across the week so that there is a record of who has had a turn in that week. If filing is a challenge for your service, make a week's worth of rosters and pin them together so that they can hang in public view.

Software preferences will follow other media trends and what is popular one year may be replaced by something else the next. Not to worry though because younger children often will tolerate what the older ones have cast off. In general though, games with short play length will be popular in OSHC due to the time limits on turns. Children enjoy mini games that allow the player to complete a game in a short frame of time. They also like platform games, or games with levels, because they can achieve a sense of completion by finishing a level, if not the whole game, in a short play session. Children may also choose to play longer games and when time limits interrupt a player's progress, they can save the game with a password and the next child can commence play from where the other left off. This is a form of group play that many children enjoy and it should not be discouraged. On the other hand, if a child wants to save his/her game to complete later, they should be able to do so and not be forced to give the game up to the group.

MEDIA ASSESSMENT TASK –

Video Game Playing

Answer the following questions about video game playing at your service:

1. How many children usually play video games together at one time?

2. If they are not all holding the controls, what are they doing?

3. Where have problems erupted with respect to video game play, if at all?

4. How have you responded to these problem moments?

5. What is the turn taking system in your service? How did this develop?

6. What would you like to improve about video game playing?

7. Do you ensure that everyone who wants a turn gets one? How?

8. Do the children generate other activities related to video game play? (drawing, writing, chase)?

9. Is the gaming space large enough for the demand?

10. What are the children doing with their bodies as they play?

Assessing Media Provision & Use Patterns

Computers

Computer use in OSHC is among the least well-developed areas of media use because the resource infrastructure is so inconsistent from service to service. Some services have access to the school's computer lab or to the school's computer network while others have relatively new stand alone personal computers and still others have very outdated computers that are unfamiliar to the children.

The best computer access and provision in OSHC services is seen where the service has access to the school's computer lab and network on a daily basis. Children enjoy working on their school projects and homework in their free time and adults should be pleased to see such enthusiasm and should aim to support it. Where children have access to the school's computer facilities, they engage in a wide range of uses including adding special touches to projects, completing work that they didn't have time to finish in class, practicing lessons they learned in class and applying skills they learned in class. They also spend a lot of time engaged in non-school uses of the computers, surfing the web, playing games, looking up hobbies and interests.

In addition to what they do, also how they do it is important. At OSHC, children most often use computers in public and with peers. They are constantly seeking approval and advice from friends, sharing work with each other and discovering new applications together.

The best arrangements for computer use require that children be allowed to use them with companions and that computers be in public view. Tucking computers away from the rest of the OSHC activities and space makes them too much like computers at home and reduces the benefit that OSHC has to offer. When computers are in public view, children are compelled to be self-regulating and self-monitoring because a mechanism of surveillance is in place. One of the greatest concerns OSHC staff and schools have about the Internet is that children will go to sites that they shouldn't visit. This is much less likely to occur when computers are in public view. Moreover, keeping computers in public view encourages collaboration and group play or use around computers. As one child passes by the screen, she may become interested in something that another child is doing on screen. This can be the start of a new friendship or a new collaboration among old friends.

> *MEDIA ASSESSMENT TASK –*
>
> ### Computers and the Internet
>
> Answer the following questions for computers and the Internet:
>
> 1. Where are the computers located? Why are they placed there?
> 2. Can you see the screens from different vantage points in the room?
> 3. Does your space allow children to use computers in pairs or groups?
> 4. Do all the children have access to the computers? How often?
> 5. Which computer activities are popular with the children?
> 6. Are the children allowed to use the Internet? Are there restrictions? What are these restrictions and why are they in place?
> 7. Is there something you would like to improve about your computer provision (printer, scanner, more terminals, more software)?
> 8. What sort of rules do you have about computer use? How were the rules of use developed and is this an ongoing process?
> 9. Are the rules for use posted publicly?

Media Futures in OSHC

Music listening and music making are under-developed areas of activity in the OSHC media landscape. While most services have a CD player or radio for children to use, they are not as often in use as other media. Although the research in this area is limited we consistently observed that girls use the CD player to accompany dancing. Small groups of girls will get together regularly to develop dance routines for certain songs. They usually bring their own CDs from home and they sometimes imitate the music videos they have seen on television (outside of OSHC). We have also observed children recording music on tape players but this was
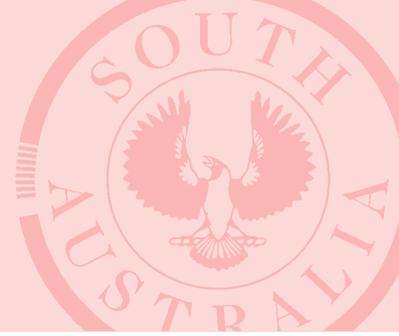
less frequent. With the convergence of media that is making digital recording, editing, distribution and playback a simple question of software, it is possible to envision more music-making activities in OSHC. Projects could easily utilise computer equipment and some other peripherals to complement activities like dramatic performance and computer use. Such programming could help make what is currently a sub-culture activity (girls dance choreography) into an activity that appeals to a broader share of the children. Blending music listening and production with computer use can also support distribution networks, or sharing of music with others outside of OSHC, like parents and classmates. It is also recommended that staff encourage music and dance activities because they provide a child-directed context for essential physical activity and exercise.

Relatedly, Personal Technologies, like the iPod, are increasingly important in everyday life and they may be the next media challenge for OSHC. Are children bringing mobile phones to OSHC? Are there rules for use of these personal media in OSHC? What are the rules meant to manage? Have you given any thought to incorporating personal media into the media mix at your service?

Among other uses, mobile phones are fast becoming the digital camera of choice. Do you have a budding photographer in your midst? Can mobile phones be used to keep time limits on the oval or around video games? Perhaps more pointedly, is the mobile phone becoming the game platform of choice and what are the implications for balance of personal and public resources if children bring their mobile phones to OSHC to play digital games?

The use of personal technologies is beyond the scope of this resource because they are only just becoming a feature of OSHC and there is no research data to support recommendations for use. During the research process that informs this publication, children were not using mobile phones at OSHC but some were bringing their own handheld game devices. Some services were using mobile phones to communicate between staff members to help facilitate childcare across large physical spaces. Although the research here is scant, it does indicate that the time is right to start paying attention to these emerging media with an aim to learning how to incorporate them productively into OSHC programs.

MEDIA ASSESSMENT TASK –

Space and Place

Draw a map of your service marking each activity area and the open spaces.

Label the media areas.

- How does each media space function?
- How is the furniture arranged in this space?
- How many children can use the medium at one time?
- Does using media conflict with other uses of the space?
- Do other activity areas abut the media area? What effect does this have?
- Does the space have more than one purpose?
- Can you imagine changing the spatial arrangements for better utility?


MEDIA ASSESSMENT TASK –

Social Dimensions of Play

Conduct careful observation of children using/playing with media.

Write down your observations.

- What are the children doing with their bodies as they play with this medium?
- How are they collaborating?
- How would you describe their facial expressions and vocalisations?
- Which media appear to be popular?
- From your observations, do you have an idea why these are popular?
- Which media properties are popular across media platforms?
- Which media are ignored, neglected or unpopular?
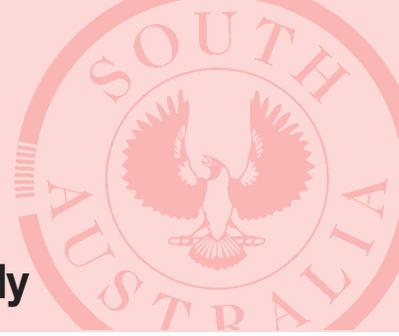
How can OSHC contribute to helping children develop their media competency?

Keeping in mind the **3Cs of Context, Content and Connections**, OSHC can make the most of its unique position in a child's life and its resources to aid the development of children's media competency.

Context

A key social feature of the OSHC community is that it allows children to make independent choices within reasonable and safe limits. For media use activities the limitations are often set by the availability and access to hardware and content. Safe limitations are also established and maintained by the rules of use that are recommended for the different media. Context is what is available, how it is accessed and the social use patterns that develop around those provisions.

Questions to consider:

Context – Time and Space

- Where are media located?
- What media are available?
- When is media use permitted or encouraged?
- How much time is given to media use?
- How is media play encouraged (individually or in groups)?
- Are the rules for media use explicit?

Content

The range of media content in OSHC is similar to what we find in family homes but more restricted in variety and in how and when it is used. OSHC makes limited use of free-to-air television, restricts the selection of movies to G and PG classifications, and keeps a small selection of digital games that appeal to the broadest audience within OSHC. In services where access is provided to the school's computers, networked software and the Internet, the selection is wider and we see more girls engaged with media. When OSHC offers access to the schools' computing facilities, it offers more than most family homes. Moreover, the context of OSHC means that these media are used in different ways than we find for both homes and classrooms.

Questions to consider:

Content – Choice and Limits

- Who selects content?
- What are the criteria for selection?
- Is the content range appealing to a wide audience?
- Is there something for everyone?

Connections

OSHC offers a unique setting that is neither home nor classroom but connects the two places in important ways. Electronic and digital media also make connections between people and places. Making the most of OSHC's unique qualities has two meanings here. First of all media use in OSHC connects children, media, and places in ways that are different to both home and classroom. Secondly, through media use, the three spaces of home, classroom and OSHC are connected with one another.

Questions to consider:

Connections – Linking media to people, places and production

- Are the media in OSHC making connections with homes and classrooms?
- Are children connecting through media?
- How are OSHC media related to classroom media?
- What production activities are children engaging with in OSHC?
- How is OSHC expanding on media use at home or in classrooms?

Children connect with other children at OSHC through media. Children at OSHC connect with media in ways that are different to their media use patterns at home and at school. OSHC provides media that some children don't normally have access to at home. For other children OSHC is a place where they can use familiar media with companions and peers. OSHC is a place where kids can use familiar media in special ways that don't happen at home or at school. Most importantly for the further development of media competency, OSHC can provide media production opportunities that seldom occur in classrooms or at home.

Research conducted for this publication discovered that:

- At home, most children play video games alone
- At OSHC all video game play and computer use is social
- 64% of children play video games at OSHC while 80% play them at home
- Nearly all children watch television at home, less than half watch TV at OSHC
- Only 20% of children use their family's home computer to do school work
- At OSHC 55% of children used computers for school exercises and assignments

What is Different about Video Game Play at Home and at OSHC?

Video game play at OSHC is most often a shared activity

At home, 38% of children most often play video games alone;

At OSHC, only 23% reported playing video games alone

At home, 48% said that they sometimes played either with a friend or sibling

A much larger share, 77% play video games with a peer or peer group at OSHC

SURVEY **FINDINGS**

Who Watches Television and Movies at OSHC?

Nearly 91% of children watch television regularly at home

only 46% reported watching television at OSHC

85% reported watching video (DVD) at home regularly

72% watch video (DVD) at OSHC

Who plays video games at OSHC?

80% of children surveyed play video games at home

64% play at OSHC

Among those with video games at home

only 40% of girls also play video games at OSHC;

89% of boys also play video games at OSHC

Children with video games at home are

slightly less likely to play video games at OSHC

This is accounted for by girls who are less likely to play video games at OSHC

Not only in how they use media but also in their frequency of media use, children's media activities between home, classroom and OSHC vary considerably. This indicates that OSHC is a third space in the lives of many children and that our knowledge of children's media use needs to account for what goes on in this space.

It also suggests that OSHC is an important space for the development of media competency.

How do we create environments that are supportive of children's media competency development? Paying attention to the 3Cs of Content, Context, and Connections provides a base from which many positive media activities can be fostered.

Goals for OSHC Media Use

1. Making media use more public
2. Maintaining the emphasis on social use of media
3. Using consumer media to encourage media production
4. Linking consumption of entertainment media with other activities

Goal 1 – Making media use more public is a goal that capitalises on what OSHC already does, it supports children's collaborative and social uses of media. Making media use public also responds to common fears that adults have about media use and the potential for children to be alone and isolated. It is difficult for media use to be isolating if it is public, social, and collaborative.

- Media use rules should be posted publicly to acknowledge that media use is a social practice with collective responsibility.

- Public media culture should be encouraged. Develop media appreciation materials and post them around the service. A few suggestions: movie review bulletin board; a digital games monthly publication produced by children about their game play culture; an OSHC website that includes audio-visual materials produced by children (song recordings, drawings, animations etc).

- Media materials should be kept in public view. Maintain media collections and libraries in public view because they are public and social resources. This allows children and parents to see what is on offer and to be assured that the selection is appealing and acceptable.

- An open feedback policy should be maintained so that children and their families can give comment on media activities and provisions.

Goal 2 – Maintaining the emphasis on the social use of media is inseparable from public media use. When media use is public, it is also social.

- Encourage children's group use of media by making the physical spaces large enough to comfortably accommodate groups of children around the hardware, whether it's television, games, computers or the next generation of media. This allows children to collaborate and cooperate while it discourages solitary use of media (children get enough of this at home).

- Limited resources force collaboration and sharing of resources.

- Provide support for children to manage collaborative media use. This may include providing resources for rosters, timers, and supervision of turn taking.

- Position computers so that screens can be seen by others; this encourages shared computer use and it also allows for passive surveillance.

- Invite children's suggestions for media activities and content provision. Allow them to bring materials from home, providing they fit the classification guidelines and taste culture of your service.

Goal 3 – Encourage media production

While media use is popular in OSHC, most services do not provide many opportunities for children to make media. Producing media (media production) is the other side of consumption. Most home use of media falls to the side of consumption. In classrooms, children do engage in media production activities but often with severe time constraints and even content/subject constraints. OSHC can offer children the time and space to create their own media objects, on the subjects that they chose, at a leisurely pace (the pace of consumption).

The main idea is to make things with media or make things for media.

- Video production can be supported by use of video cameras, mobile phones, or digital cameras. Hardware can be borrowed from schools or from family homes. Make movies, a news show, music videos, a cooking show, sports program - the range is as vast as the imagination.

- Editing images is readily facilitated by computers; most computers now come with simple editing software. Free-ware and share-ware programs are also available to download.

- Use computers to facilitate media making. Making magazines about video game use or movies allows children to demonstrate what they think about the media they enjoy. It offers a creative outlet for children to write, draw and design with digital tools. It allows children to practice the computer skills they are learning at home and at school. It creates a "take-away" object that they can circulate publicly (adding value to Goal 1 Making Media Public).

- Children's drawings and writings can be incorporated into publications, bulletin boards, websites and displays. Traditional media can be digitised and imported to other media.
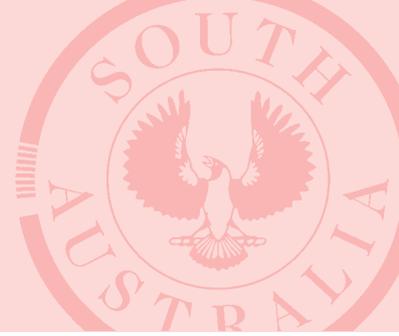
 Children and Media in Out of School Hours Care

● Ensure that staff are comfortable guiding and assisting children with media production activities. Consider media and staff development opportunities.

Goal 4 – Link media use to other activities

● Develop physical activities and games that relate to popular media. For instance, there are several video games that are based on the moves of famous skateboarding champion Tony Hawk. Develop a skateboarding day where tricks are taught and contests are judged.

● Develop creative activities that are based on media. A popular video game in OSHC has been *Pokemon Snap*, a game where the player takes photographs of the various characters in an effort to collect them all. Give each child a disposable camera or, have them bring a camera from home (a mobile phone also would work). Have the children "snap" shots of each other to build a collection of all the kids at OSHC. The images can be put on a bulletin board or a website. The images and the background can be decorated, labelled, and elaborated over time.

● Allow children to bring media from home or classroom to use in OSHC. This builds the links between the three places and allows children to use the media in different ways because the use contexts are different.

● Apply media skills to other activities. Have children conduct online research for recipes and food values that can be linked to OSHC cooking projects.

> *OSHC is in a special position to provide opportunities to children that help them build their media competency. Embrace the popularity of media and build positively on it.*

Key Steps to Media Management and Integration in Programming

For each medium in your service, a set of fundamental questions should drive programming.

● How is the service incorporating media activities and media use with other activities?

● Is the service providing adequate access to media for all children?

● Are the media provisions and programmes adequate for the demand?

● Are the media provisions and programmes integrated with other learning and making the most of the relations between OSHC, home and school?

● What features are common to the media selections that children are making?

● If media activities are not being selected by children, ask yourself how you can shape them to become more appealing to children.

● Are our media activities public?

● What principles are guiding our media management and regulation of use?

● How are children and their families involved in development and revision of media use policies in OSHC?

● What role does media production have in your programming?

● Are staff trained to assist children with media activities?

● Is the service budgeting for media upgrades and maintenance?

Media trends and innovations are constantly developing and it is unlikely that an OSHC service will have the financial resources to keep apace of such rapid developments. Nevertheless, you can still provide engaging and productive media activities with limited resources by thinking about media in terms of the three Cs – Context, Content and Connections.

4 Resource and Reference Organisations
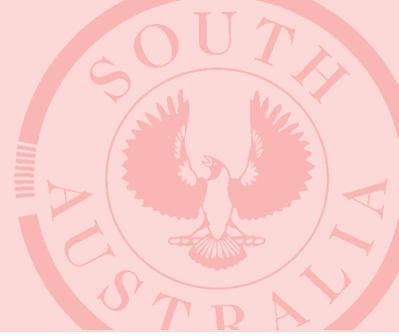
> *The children who attend your service are your best resource.*
> *Ask them what they like and aim to incorporate their preferences and practices in your programming. Find out what they are doing in class and at home and consider how you can build on that and diversify those experiences.*

Australian Organisations

Australian Children's Television Foundation
http://www.actf.com.au

"The ACTF develops and produces high quality television programs for children. It aims to create innovative, entertaining and educational programs. ACTF programs have screened in over 100 countries and have won over 95 local and international awards. Its television series include hits such as Round the Twist and Crash Zone."

ACTF programmes would normally be highly recommended for use in OSHC. Many of their programmes are made for use in schools and they develop supplementary materials to accompany the programmes.

Australian Teachers of Media
http://www.metromagazine.com.au/atom/about.html

"ATOM is an independent, non-profit, professional association for Teachers of Media and Teachers who wish to use media effectively in their classroom. ATOM aims to foster and encourage a generation of students who are both multi-literate and technologically savvy."

ATOM may be able to assist you in developing recreational media activities. Many states have media education associations with local contacts and these are listed on ATOM's website.

Australian Classification Board
http://www.classification.gov.au/

The OFLC is the government body in Australia that sets the classification for each film and video game on the market. Classification (rating) systems are different in each country. In the USA, two separate industry organizations set the ratings for films and video games. In Australia we now have one set of Codes for both media.

The Codes are the abbreviations that you are likely familiar with: G, PG, M and so forth. These Codes really do not say much about the film or game though. The most recent revision of the Codes has resulted in PG being recommended for children over 15 years of age. Since this means that only G movies are blanket approved for the OSHC age-group, you should become familiar with the Classification Guidelines. The Guidelines explain why a film or game has been given a particular classification. Download the Film and Computer Game Guidelines from the OFLC website and have them on display publicly.

The OFLC also have a database of their classification decisions. This may be useful at some time.

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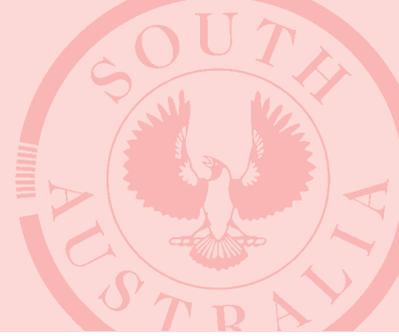
International Organisations

CHI KIDS (Assn. for Computing Machinery, an international org., CHI stands for Computer Human Interface)
http://www.hcibib.org/kids

"The Kids and Computers page is a collection of resources for designers, producers, researchers, and practitioners of interactive media for children and adolescents."

This website may be helpful for planning and designing media activities.

Children, Youth & Environments back issues of the journal are online
http://www.jstor.org/journal/chilyoutenvi

Children, Mobile Phones and Internet conference proceedings from Mitsubishi Research Institute (2003)
http://www.iajapan.org/hotline/2003mobilepro-en.html

The conference proceedings may be of some interest if you are thinking about management issues relative to mobile media. Of course, it will soon be outdated but you might find other similar sites on the web with a little research.

USA Organisations

ALA ALSC (American Library Assn., Association for Library Service to Children) "Great Web Sites for Kids"
http://gws.ala.org/

ALA have been maintaining and updating a list for years. As with most foreign-hosted resources, some will not appeal to the Australian audience but many will be ideal for OSHC. You should spend some time examining the resources they list and select a few that you think might be attractive to your community. Introduce new sites regularly by posting the URL in public view or bookmarking them on the computer for easy access.

National School Boards Foundation (USA)
Safe & Smart (Guidelines for Internet Use)
http://grunwald.com/pdfs/Grunwald_NSBA_Study_Safe%20and%20Smart.pdf

"Research and Guidelines for Children's Use of the Internet" may be a useful resource if you are not following the guidelines for use of Internet that your host school follows. If your computers are not linked to the school's network and you do not have filtering software, these guidelines may provide a model that you would adapt for your community.

Lesson Plans Page.com
http://www.lessonplanspage.com

Lots of lesson plans for computer use, some better than others. Many can be used by children to teach other children (adult teacher not always required)

eSchool News Online
http://www.eschoolnews.org

eSchool News provides a good overview of issues and trends in the USA. You'll find out about projects that you might want to become involved with electronically. Connect Aussie kids with kids abroad.

Center for Media Literacy (CML)
www.medialit.org

CML has been developing media literacy curriculum and research for 25 years. As with all such organisations, some of their materials will be useful and others less so but they are well worth a look to help you develop media activities for OSHC.

Online Activities for Kids

Many English language online activities for children are developed with the US audience in mind. This is because the US population is so large that many people are working in this field. The activities about American culture and history are probably not as appropriate for Australian children as perhaps the art and science activities would be. Best to do an online search for "online activities for children" and review the recommendations individually until you find a set of websites that you would recommend.

Virtual Explorers http://www.virtualexplorers.org

Fraboom http://www.fraboom.com

ABC Kids http://www.abc.net.au/abckids

Talk to teachers and other local resource officers to find out what they would recommend for children's recreational media activities