

DCMS REVIEW OF BBC DIGITAL SERVICES

BBC DIGITAL REVIEW: CBEBBIES AND CBBC

BY MAIRE MESSENGER DAVIES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. OVERVIEW: THE BROADCASTING WORLD OF CHILDREN – WHO ARE NEITHER CONSUMERS, NOR CITIZENS

1.1 Children's services over time

These have changed fundamentally from a terrestrial, two channel system, based on an after-school schedule of mixed genres, to a digital system, with (currently) 12 dedicated children's channels available on digital, satellite, cable. All of these, except the BBC channels, are commercial, paid for by subscription and advertising. All the commercial channels, with the exception of Trouble, originate in the USA.

1.2 Characteristics of the new services

The digital world is round-the-clock. However, CBeebies and CBBC stop transmitting at 7 pm, CBeebies' commercial 'sister' channel for toddlers, Nick Junior, goes on until 10 pm and all the other channels continue transmitting all night.

1.3 The provision of digital programming for children is seen as a key element in the BBC's digital strategy as a whole.

1.4 There is evidence that its digital platform, Freeview, has been a success in encouraging digital takeup. Free to air digital TV growth has increased from 0.5 million to about 3 million in the two years from 2001-2003. Two thirds of these three million receive digital television through Freeview.

1.5 This has implications for the BBC's competitors. According to the David Graham Associates research agency,¹ 548,000 CBBC viewers aged 6-13 live in Freeview DTT households, and therefore cannot receive any commercial children's channel.

1.6 Children watching CBBC doesn't necessarily make them inaccessible to the commercial channels. DGAM also pointed out that: '2.4 million viewers aged 6-13 live in SKY Digital households, and can access up to 9 dedicated commercial children's channels aimed at their age group.'

1.7 The BBC's programming provision

The BBC is still the major provider of all kinds of children's broadcasting. Current options are: the two dedicated digital channels, CBBC (aimed at 6-12 year olds) and CBeebies, (aimed at 2-5 year olds) plus daily mixed schedules on BBC1 and 2, all supported by Online websites. This constitutes good value and choice for parents.

2. PROGRAMMING ON CBEBBIES: SCHEDULE, CONTENT AND COMPETITORS AND HOW CRITERIA ARE MET

2.1 Scheduling

CBeebies is sensitive to the routines of young children's lives. It is transmitted between 6 am and 7 pm including a Bedtime Hour between 6 and 7 pm. Nick Junior to some extent also reflects this time-of-day approach, which has an educational function, but the other channels do not.

2.2 Content and distinctiveness

A sample of content was viewed at different times. Distinctive aspects of CBeebies included coherence of the schedule, with visual and thematic links, also found on the website. The majority of material viewed on other channels was American and was frequently interrupted by advertising, primarily for either snack foods aimed at children, or financial services aimed at adults.

2.3 CBeebies criteria

Approval for the new services was given on the basis of a set of conditions, summarised briefly below.

2.4 Mixed schedule.

The requirement to 'Deliver a mixed schedule of programmes, covering music and movement storytelling, make and do, simple science, natural history and puzzle-programmes as well as animation' has been amply fulfilled with a wide range of genres and some truly innovative new ones, such as Balamory, the first pre-school 'soap'.

2.5 Education

The requirement for a 'Strong educational and interactive strand throughout the day including peak viewing hours' was found to be the case in all the material I viewed. Overtly educational genres provided by CBeebies include 'factual' programmes such as Fab Lab, Zingalong and Tikkabilla. Storytelling programmes also contain factual content as well as many forms of social and interactive learning.

2.6 Interactivity

There is much evidence that children respond to the programmes in an interactive way including emails, letters, artworks and phone calls to the programmes. All the children interviewed were familiar with the various functions of the remote control and 'the red button' to play games. According to the BBC report, the interactive enhanced text service had '45% awareness' in Sky households in November 2003 and usage in November 2003 had gone down from 18% to 14%.

2.7 Social learning

Although the BBC stresses the ethnic diversity of its presenters and actors, storytelling has a strong tendency to make authority figures male, and care-takers female. There is also a dearth of characters representing older people.

2.8 Comparison with competitors

The requirement for 'A higher level of educational programming than its competitors' was also amply fulfilled. The proportions of educational and schools programming on CBeebies between April and November 2003 according to BARB was 73.7% compared with 47% educational and 50% educational on Disney Playhouse and Nick Junior respectively. 'Educational' needs to be defined more precisely.

2.9 The requirement for 'Around 90% of output to be made in the EU/EEA' could not be independently verified but, according to the BBC's submission, 95.82% of CBeebies total broadcast in February 2003 and 95.78% in March 2004 originated in the EU/UK. This represented 81.9% of all hours broadcast in Feb 03 and 82.29% of the hours broadcast in March 04. In the BBC Financial year 03/04 to date, 95% of eligible hours were UK/EU programming.

2.10 The requirement that '80% of airtime must be directed to originally produced or commissioned programming' could not be independently verified. In the submission it is claimed that 80% of 'all originated hours' were 'eligible hours' and that a quarter of these 'eligible hours' would be 'new material hours'. In the figures given this proportion of 'new material hours' is claimed to be 41% in the first year from launch, rising to 57% in the current year to date. Investment in new British programming was 90%.

2.11 The requirement that CBeebies 'Must not be developed at the expense of programmes catering for this age group on BBC1 and BBC2' was interpreted in two ways: firstly in terms of whether the diversity of the programming on BBC1 and 2 had diminished, and secondly in terms of audience. The range of programming for young children was greater on CBeebies than on BBC1 and 2 in the small programming sample viewed. But, according to the BBC's submission, "pre-school programming on the analogue channels has increased by more than 30% to 668 hours with new dedicated pre-school slots on both BBC1 and 2." In terms of audience, see section 3.9 below.

3. PROGRAMMING ON CBBC: SCHEDULE, CONTENT, COMPETITORS AND HOW IT MEETS THE CRITERIA

3.1 Mixed schedule

The requirement to 'Deliver a mixed schedule of news, drama, comedy entertainment and factual programmes through the day including peak viewing hours [with] live programmes including news bulletins at the core of the schedule' was broadly fulfilled in the sample reviewed which was fairly strong on factual material, but rather light on drama. The excellent home-grown drama viewed was all comedy. Xchange, the showcase factual programme on CBBC, had many excellent, intelligent, lively, informative features, including the use of children as critics and performers.

3.2 Use of archive

Very few programmes from the archive appeared in the sample viewed. There is a case for a CBBC 'Gold' where serious dramas and costume dramas could be seen again..

3.3 Quality of content and tone

See positive comments in 3.2 above. CBBC is harder to characterise by a sense of audience than CBeebies. The channel content seemed to be particularly appealing to girls of 7 and upwards. The presenters sometimes seemed to be too frenetic for ordinary day-time conversation with children and there were some cases of bad grammar and bad taste.

3.4 Diversity and regionalism

The requirement "That each [BBC digital] service shall stimulate, support and reflect the diversity of cultural activity in the UK within the defined scope of the service" and that for both channels a condition "a proportion of programme production [*not specifying how much*] must be allocated to companies based outside London" was fulfilled in that BBC Scotland 'is a significant provider of new programming' with approximately 30% of programme spend allocated to Scotland for innovative programmes, such as Balamory and Zingalong, but Wales and Northern Ireland do not appear to be equally represented in production resources.

3.5 Distinctiveness from competition

The requirement for 'Distinctiveness from competition' was fulfilled on the CBBC channel. Competitors relied more heavily on American cartoons and American teen dramas with no factual material, whether News, or magazine (c.f. Xchange) in the schedules reviewed. CBBC also has no advertisements, a valued feature for both parents and children.

3.6 Online/interactive

Online and interactive resources are still developing. Online material is separate from transmitted output. Emailing and texting are popular forms of communication with the programmes. The interactive possibilities of games are capable of development. Xchange particularly made good use of the involvement of the child audience, and CBBC's 'Stunts' involving events around the country are generally successful.

3.7 The requirement for a 'Similar balance of originated and acquired programmes throughout the day including peak hours' could not be independently verified. According to the BBC, in the year to date, the balance is 3.7:1 in favour of originated programming.

3.8 The requirement for 'around 75% output and investment in the EU/EEA' could not be independently verified. However, the BBC Annual Report states that 82% of output has been made in EU/EEA. It would be useful to know how much is from mainland Europe.

3.9 The requirement that 'This service must not be developed at the expense of programmes on BBC1 and 2' was reviewed in terms of both programming and audience. From my sampling, the programming range on BBC1 (and 2) remains more diverse than on the Channels (see section 3.1 in my report).

3.10 With regard to audience figures, most recent figures from the BBC's audience research department show that viewing to CBBC output as a whole has decreased. The BBC overall has lost viewing figures for the after school time slot in 2003/4 to their commercial competitors – another piece of evidence that commercial competitors may

not be suffering unduly from the entry of the BBC into the digital marketplace.

4. AUDIENCE RESPONSES: OFFICIAL FIGURES AND SURVEYS

4.1 Reach of CBeebies compared to competition:

According to BBC's audience figures CBeebies' reach has gone up more than that of Nick Junior, from an average weekly reach of 9.5% of all children in Mar 02 to an average weekly reach of 16% in April 2004. Nick Junior went from a reach of 4.8% in February 2002 to a 7.2% reach in April 2004.

4.2 Comparison between CBBC and Boomerang

Since January 2004 CBBC overtook its nearest competitor, Boomerang and gained a reach of 16.2 compared to Boomerang's 14.3 in April 2004.

Competitive set figures do not show a negative impact from the launch of the BBC digital channels, which suggests that the BBC is not having a negative commercial impact on the competition.

4.3 Email responses from the digital services review

29 email responses sent to the DCMS as part of the digital review were primarily very positive about CBeebies, but it seemed to be harder to please the wider range of ages and backgrounds in the CBBC target audience.

4.3 Informal viewing with children by MMD, July 2004

In two groups of children, a family in London, and a group of 5-8 year olds in Northern Ireland, it was found that children were familiar with all the digital children's channels but broadcast output was still popular. Irish children also watched RTE's The Den. Children were adept at using remote controls, and some aspects of computer technology. Northern Irish children were able to list all the main digital children's channels except the CBBC channel, whose title did not appear to be distinctive to them from the general BBC output.

5. SUMMARY

5.1 Distinctiveness from competition

The BBC has one big advantage over the new commercial channels: the fact that the parents of their target audiences grew up with the BBC's model of children's television (also adopted by ITV and the other commercial channels) which gives a predisposed channel loyalty. Parents who liked CBBC as children are likely to want this for their own children.

5.2 Evidence of high quality

The traditions of high-quality information, education and entertainment for children built up by the BBC over the years (in collaboration as well as competition with CITV and other commercial networks) are clearly evident in the current output.

5.3 Supporting the industry

The BBC is especially important to the whole universe of children's television because it is a major source of expertise, innovation and training for the whole industry and commercial channels benefit from the production and training ethos provided – and guaranteed, thanks to the license fee – by the BBC's institutionalisation of children's programming as a major department.

5.4 Freedom from commercial advertising

The lack of advertisements is an enormous plus for the adult viewer, a point made repeatedly by parents in the qualitative research and also by some children.

6.HOW MIGHT THEY BE DEVELOPED IN FUTURE?

Recommendations arising from the above review:

- More use of the archive, especially of the BBC's own programmes which were funded by the license fee and as such, should be freely accessible to the public who paid for them: a CBBC 'Gold' channel would be welcome.
- More use of European programming e.g. S4C's Fairytales of the World and programmes made in mainland Europe
- A clearer, more comprehensive, industry-wide definition of 'educational' to enable more valid comparisons between channels.
- Co-operation as well as competition between providers in terms of recognising the need to nurture talent and technical innovation for the whole industry of children's programming and to acknowledge the needs of the whole child audience.
- Less stereotyping in content and a more diverse range of types of adult presenter, especially in the presentation of serious content.
- Continued acknowledgement of the value of traditional forms of TV interactivity, such as joining in with singing and actions, dancing and answering questions. The most popular form of contact with children is still direct address to the camera
- More awareness of the general ecology of the digital universe, especially for older children, for instance links and trails for adult BBC educational programming.
- Continued political and industry recognition of the BBC's role in stimulating innovation, creativity and training in the industry as a whole – especially in the children's area: commissioning independents, supporting animation, the back-catalogue and tradition of programming going back to the 1950s.
- In terms of training and research, more links with training programmes and educational resources in the Further and Higher Education systems, for instance, dedicated scholarships for people who want to specialise in children's production.
- Digital channels need to acknowledge the presence in the audience of children in all parts of their 'footprints', including non-UK citizens; the European dimension also comes in here.

- Further development of the online interactive dimension; the websites have great potential which not all parents may be aware of.
- Is CBBC the right name for the older children's channel? The fact that the children in Northern Ireland, who could name all the other children's channels, didn't identify CBBC as a separate channel could mean that children find it less easy to find this channel than others. Should the name be changed?
- Sustain the pro-child ethos demonstrable throughout the organisation, including sustaining the unified management structure of CBBC with all branches of children's programming, including online provision, under one 'umbrella'. The concentration of these activities in one place, BBC Television Centre's East Tower, makes CBBC a real, not just a 'virtual', place, dedicated to children, and that shows on the screen.

BBC DIGITAL REVIEW: CBEEBIES AND CBBC

FINAL REPORT

GOALS OF INQUIRY: To address the following two questions:

- I. How well have the services (CBeebies and CBBC) met the approval conditions?**

Which are:

CBEEBIES

1. Deliver a mixed schedule of programmes, covering music and movement storytelling, make and do, simple science, natural history and puzzle-programmes as well as animation.
2. Strong educational and interactive strand throughout the day including peak viewing hours.
3. A higher level of educational programming than its competitors.
4. Around 90% of output must be made in the EU/EEA
5. 80% of airtime must be directed to originally produced or commissioned programming
6. must not be developed at the expense of programmes catering for this age group on BBC1 and BBC2

CBBC

1. Deliver mixed schedule of news, drama, comedy entertainment and factual programmes throughout the day including peak viewing hours. Live programmes including news bulletins must be at the core of the schedule.
2. Online and interactive resources must support the service and shall be developed further as technology allows.
3. Similar balance of originated and acquired programmes through the day including peak hours
4. Around 75% output and investment in the EU/EEA
5. Not developed at the expense of programmes on BBC1 and 2

- II. How might they be developed in future?**

In addressing these questions, this report will take the following form:

1. **OVERVIEW: THE BROADCASTING WORLD OF CHILDREN**
2. **REVIEW OF CBEEBIES, SCHEDULE, CONTENT, COMPETITORS, CRITERIA**
3. **REVIEW OF CBBC**
4. **AUDIENCE RESPONSES INCLUDING OFFICIAL AUDIENCE RESEARCH FROM THE BBC AND MARKET RESEARCH AND MY AUDIENCE RESEARCH WITH CHILDREN**
5. **SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS/FUTURE**

1. OVERVIEW: THE BROADCASTING WORLD OF CHILDREN²

CBeebies is an important part of the new digital portfolio strategy for BBC television . . . The BBC is committed to driving digital take up and CBeebies plays a critical role in that objective.

Submission for the Secretary of State's Review of the BBC's new Digital Television Services, BBC, March 2004, p. 2

Before considering the role of children's television in advancing the cause of digital take-up, two key components of the status of children have to be borne in mind. In considering the provision of services for them, whether by public or private funding, we have to remember that, first, children under the age of 13 are not consumers. They do not buy most goods and services directly, nor are they able to earn money to pay for these goods and services. Where broadcasting is concerned, children may have their own TVs in their bedrooms, but they are not liable for the BBC license fee, nor do they have the legal right to subscribe to commercial channels. Any disposable income they have is via adults' (primarily parents') donation. Second, children are not citizens – although they are 'citizens in the making' - in the sense of being eligible to vote. Hence they have no direct democratic means of influencing the society in which they live. Given both these conditions of relative, and sometimes absolute, financial and political powerlessness, it can be argued that the state – via its various institutions, including the governance and regulation of broadcasting and other media – has to be a guarantor of the well-being, needs, wishes, rights, and wants of children, in conjunction with their parents and caretakers. Parents alone cannot equip children to be active, informed, media-literate citizens and consumers of a complex modern society. The education, health, legal, welfare, leisure and media services in which the state has a stake have to help parents and children in this task: this is the case for public service broadcasting for children. This is the background against which a public service broadcaster's, in this case, the BBC's, provision of services for children needs to be viewed.

1.1 Children's services over time

Before the arrival of the multi-channel (cable/satellite), and now digital, television age, (the first dedicated channel for children, Nickelodeon, launched in Britain in 1993) children in the UK watched special programmes made for them in dedicated after school (3.30-5.30) daytime blocks on the two main terrestrial channels, BBC1 (supplemented by blocks on BBC2) and ITV. Channel 4, and from 1997, Channel 5, occasionally supplemented this. Children in the UK were seen internationally to be well served at this time, particularly compared to those in the United States of America, and the service provided for them was – and still is - regarded by other countries as a model combination of the educational ideals of public service broadcasting with children's needs for playfulness, fun and relaxation; see for instance, Edward Palmer, 1988.³

The current (summer 2004) range and structure of services for children is exponentially different. The special weekly edition of the BBC's listings magazine, *The Radio Times*, for NTL households (digitally served) no longer lists digital children's channel programmes within the main daily blocks, although the terrestrial children's services remain there. The children's digital channels now merit a whole special section at the back headed

'Family Channels.' For the week 17-23rd July, when I did some of my own most dedicated viewing of these offerings, 12 'Kids' channels were listed, each with its own column, across a two-page spread:

CBBC
Playhouse Disney
Nick Junior
CBeebies
Discovery Kids,
Disney
Fox Kids
Nickelodeon
Trouble
Toonami
Cartoon Network
Boomerang.

All of these, with the exception of the BBC channels, are commercial, paid for by subscription and advertising. All the commercial channels, with the exception of Trouble, originate in the USA.

Because the schedules are exactly the same every weekday, with small variations on Saturday and Sunday, the information about the material on the channels is compressed. No programme information, such as cast lists, or plot summaries, is given. This is a diagrammatic model of the new world of digital viewing – what Raymond Williams in 1974 called 'flow': a non-stop, and regularly repeated, series of images, stories, information and, in the case of the commercial channels, advertisements, beaming into people's living rooms around the clock. Within this uninterrupted 24 hour 'flow', the BBC's children's channels still observe what in the early days of television was called 'the toddlers' truce'. CBeebies and CBBC stop transmitting at 7 pm, but CBeebies' commercial 'sister' channel for toddlers, Nick Junior, goes on until 10 pm and all the other channels continue transmitting all night.

The BBC is thus having to position itself within an extensive and growing digital multichannel television universe, including links with the internet, and interactive games, in order to attract child viewers. However, the object of the BBC's digital provision is not only to attract child viewers: as the quote above makes clear, the provision of digital programming for children is seen as a key element in the BBC's digital strategy as a whole – 'driving digital takeup'. The extent to which it might or might not have succeeded in doing this is discussed elsewhere in this report, but there is evidence that its digital platform, Freeview, has been a success in encouraging digital takeup. According to Oliver and Ohlbaum, in an independent report for the BBC, free to air digital TV growth has increased from 0.5 million to about 3 million in the two years from 2001-2003. Two thirds of these three million receive digital television through Freeview. This can be seen as good news for the BBC, but it also means that a high proportion of children watching digital channels, are not watching the whole digital universe – in other words are not being exposed to the BBC's commercial competitors.

According to the David Graham Associates research agency,⁴ 548,000 CBBC viewers aged 6-13 live in Freeview DTT households, and therefore cannot receive any commercial children's channel. In their report for Nickelodeon, critically testing the BBC's fulfilments of its commitments, and suggesting that they had not always carried them out, DGAM pointed out:

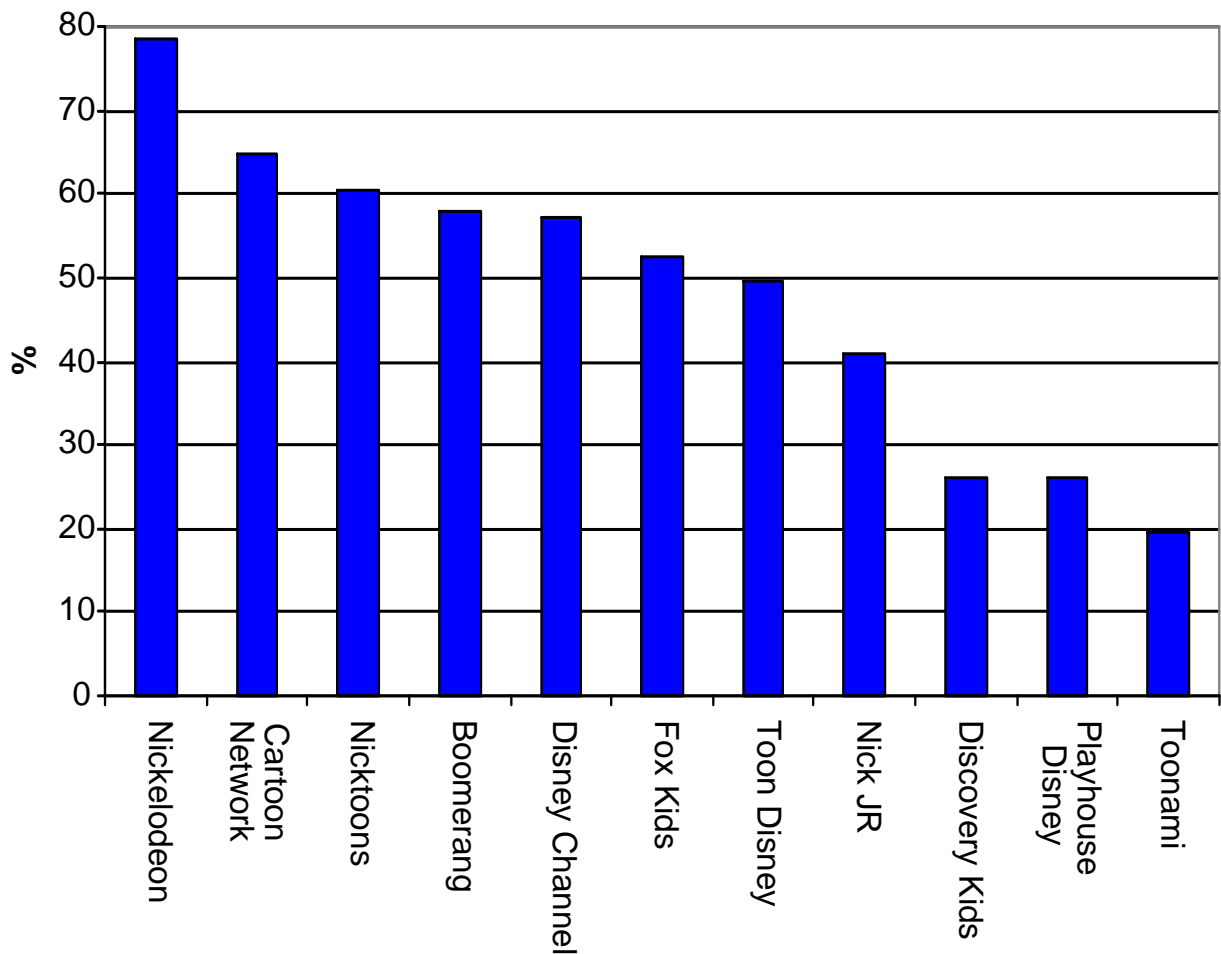
The BBC children's channels are unique in that no subscription is required to view them — they are fully funded by the licence fee, and are included in the most basic Cable or Direct-to-Home (DTH) packages, and also on the Freeview Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) service. CBBC and CBeebies are the only dedicated children's channels on the Freeview platform. Thus some children in multi-channel homes only have access to BBC digital channels. (p. 8)

DGAM also pointed out that:

A further million children who watched CBBC also had potential access to commercial children's channels as well. 2.4 million viewers aged 6-13 live in SKY Digital households, and can access up to 9 dedicated commercial children's channels aimed at their age group, but their actual access will depend on the household subscription package. Of these, 2.2 million (91%) accessed one or more commercial children's channels in December 2003. 759,000 children aged 6-13 watched CBBC on the SKY Digital platform in December 2003. (p. 8)

The chart below, taken from the DGA report indicates the percentage of SKY Digital CBBC viewers who also watched a commercial children's channel during this period.

Figure 1: % of CBBC Viewers⁵ Aged 6-13 Watching Other Digital Children's Channels - Sky Digital Households, December 2003



This chart suggests that, where children in multi-channel households have access to commercial channels, their favourite viewing is likely to be Cartoon Network and Nickelodeon. This may not be such good news for the BBC but it does suggest that being a CBBC viewer doesn't necessarily prevent the commercial channels from gaining access to child audiences – one of the concerns of the industry about the BBC being allowed to enter the digital market.

1.2 The BBC's programming provision

As The Radio Times makes clear, in the UK, the BBC is still the major provider of children's broadcasting by a very long way, and it costs parents nothing but the license fee, which also gives access to all the other BBC services, including radio – excellent value for money. There are several options: the two dedicated digital channels, CBBC (aimed at 6-12 year olds) and CBeebies, (aimed at 2-5 year olds). There is also the traditional dedicated block of viewing time every day on BBC 1 after school, plus children's programming on BBC2 during school holidays, plus access to the two digital channels on BBC2 during the day time, plus weekend schedules, both terrestrial and

digital. All of these are supported by Online websites. (I am not referring to BBC Schools material in this report). More about the different contents of these schedules is given below in the section on CBBC and CBeebies Programming.

The Secretary of State granted approval for CBeebies in September 2001. When the DCMS approved the new BBC digital services in September 2001, the secretary of state, Tessa Jowell, located the new services in the time-honoured BBC's Reithian agenda:

'...I believe the new stations for children offer the hope of a new golden age of children's programmes; a real national asset which will become a lasting legacy for children and their parents.'

Approval was given on the basis of a set of conditions and, with the help of a research assistant, I have gone through these conditions and matched them to the BBC's responses. I have also interviewed Dorothy Prior and her team, and have notes from her responses; these are included at different points in the report.

2. PROGRAMMING ON CBEEBIES: SCHEDULE, CONTENT AND COMPETITORS AND HOW CRITERIA ARE MET

2.1 Scheduling

As mentioned, CBeebies is transmitted between 6 am and 7 pm. On weekdays the schedule consists of a four-hour block repeated three times a day followed by the Bedtime Hour between 6 and 7 pm. At the weekends, the channel first offers a four-hour block aimed at very young children, repeated and then followed by an older block for three to five year olds. According to the BBC's submission, 'This is to appeal to children at the different stages of pre-school development and also to ensure complementary scheduling on BBC ONE, BBC TWO and The CBBC Channel.' (p 9.) In the CBeebies schedule, key titles, for example, Balamory, Tikkabilla, Tweenies, play 'on the hour, every hour'. The rationale for this, according to the BBC's report, is that they are thus 'easy for viewers to remember and find.' As the report puts it: 'the schedule is mood driven, recognising the daily patterns of a young child's life and the presentation links reflect the time of day.' CBeebies thus follows a long-standing tradition in British preschool programming, but also found in live programming generally, which acknowledges real time and contemporaneity - a recognition that what is happening on the screen is also happening to the viewer. This representation of time and how it is organised, can be one of the unintended educational aspects of TV scheduling – an example of what producers sometimes call 'soft learning', and in psychology is described as 'incidental learning.' Nick Junior also reflects this time-of-day approach: for instance there is a lunchtime link where the characters talk about what they will eat and how it is prepared. The other digital channels do not.

2.2 Content

There's no way to judge content properly except to look at it – and preferably to look at it in the company of children. I spent a number of hours watching at different points in the schedule, on two occasions alone, watching the transmitted schedules, on two occasions in the company of children aged between 5 and 11, also watching the transmitted schedule, and on a number of occasions looking at videotapes of programmes I'd missed. During transmission viewing, I used the EPG and remote control (sometimes guided by the children) to sample the competition channels as well. I also watched some of the terrestrial offerings from both the BBC and CITV, although I wasn't able to catch Milkshake on Five (formerly Channel 5) which was named with enthusiasm by some of the children I spoke to. I watched on one occasion on a Saturday, when the schedule was somewhat different from the weekdays, but using different combinations of the same programmes, on a Monday (in Northern Ireland) and on two different Tuesdays, one in Cardiff and one in London.

The evaluation below will be based on my impressions of programme content, and children's reactions to it, but obviously I have not been able to do more than sample a small fraction of it. However, given that programmes are repeated in four-hour blocks, it was possible to get a sense of the daily shape of the schedule. An example of the CBeebies mid-July schedule, repeated four times a day was: Teletubbies; Bits and Bobs; Fab Lab; Tweenies; The Story Makers; The Shiny Show; Tikkabilla; Bob the Builder;

Rubbadubbers; Fimbles; Come Outside followed by CBeebies birthdays; Tweenies – and then back to Teletubbies again. At the end of the day was the Bedtime hour with Fimbles, 64 Zoo Lane and another edition of The Story Makers. The flagship CBeebies programme, Balamory, was not included in this schedule, but it was shown at the weekend. Balamory is a truly innovative genre – the first pre-school 'soap.'

2.3 Programmes watched, CBeebies:

Teletubbies
Bits and Bobs
Fab Lab
Bob the Builder (2 episodes)
Dr. Otter
Postman Pat
Tweenies
Balamory
Zingalong
Storymaker
Little Red Tractor
Big Cook, Little Cook
Bedtime hour.
Links

2.4 Space, place and time: the importance of link material

An important aspect of viewing during transmission rather than on videotapes, is being able to see the links – the presentation and formatting - which are an essential part of creating the 'shape' of the channel, helping children to know what to expect, and how to plan their viewing, and also helping to create the channel's 'personality' – the kind of place it is, and the kind of people who inhabit it. There is a permanent studio location at Television Centre for all CBBC outputs, which the head of CBBC, Dorothy Prior and her colleagues, showed us. All the studio spaces where CBBC is produced are designed to create a sense of visual connection and identity between the different parts of the schedules and channels – necessary in a multi-channel environment where you need to know where you are when the remote control zapper comes to a halt. But this is also important from the commercial branding point of view. CBeebies is very successful at making it clear to the viewers where they are, because of the visual unity of the sets, the coherence of their schedule, the familiarity of many of the characters and personnel (some known from the terrestrial CBBC programming) and the thematic way in which the programmes are linked. These visual and thematic links are also found on the website – an important aspect of encouraging interactivity.

In this respect, CBeebies is quite distinctive from its competitors, Nick Junior and the cartoon channels. On CBeebies, on the Saturday I watched, there were very imaginative and informative links, based on colour-coded 'themes'. For instance, in 'the Green Room', introduced by 'Sid', the programmes were all about making things and were headed 'The Fixit Hour'. The Fixit Hour included Bob the Builder, old friends from my own children's youth, Fireman Sam and Postman Pat, and a new stop-frame animation, Dr. Otter. Sid, one of a number of lively personalities in the CBeebies presentation team,

performed the link while footballing round the green room and singing a delightful, original song about the green room's purpose – a place 'for guessing and messing'. In my notes, there is a comment on this: 'Derek Griffiths lives!' There is certainly a very strong sense of continuity from the traditions of preschool programming started by Play School (on which Derek Griffiths was a much loved musician and presenter in the 1970s and 1980s) to the kinds of techniques and formats used on CBeebies. Tikkabilla even has round, square and arched windows, as in Play School, and in some of the programmes, toys live in cupboards. All of this adds to the sense of CBeebies being a real 'place', a place with a history, as well as a familiar space.

On the Saturday afternoon, I occasionally zapped to the competition channels, as a child would do, to see if there was anything that would wean me away from the CBBC channels. On Fox Kids I found a live action Power Rangers movie. On Cartoon Network there was The Fearless Four - what looked like a science fiction animation. There were Classic Toons on playhouse Disney, with an English link voice. Natalie Appleton was reading a story on PJ's Storytime. Then there was a classic Donald Duck cartoon 'Uncle Donald's ants'. On the Disney Channel there was Sabrina the Teenage Witch. Trouble, the teenage channel, was showing Clueless (the TV series not the movie). Boomerang was showing Taz-mania. The vast majority of these were American programmes and I suspect a preschool British child would not have found them particularly appealing, though I didn't have a child with me at that point to check.

What would certainly have annoyed parents (see audience section below for quotes on this) was the fact that all the commercial channels have regular ad breaks, usually a combination of ads for snack foods including sweets and drinks and ads for financial services, such as insurance. A couple of examples of commercial breaks during my viewing were:

- Ad for the movie, Shrek 2
- Ad for cheez dippers
- Ad for travel insurance Direct Line
- Privilege motor insurance
- Lombard direct
- Baby loony tunes being trailed.
- Ad for chewy fruity smarties, Nestle.
- Ad for one account for paying off mortgage, banking with the royal bank of Scotland.
- Ad for fruit shoot drinks.
- Ad for Churchill car insurance.

The combination of snack food ads aimed at children and financial services aimed at adults seemed somewhat bizarre. They certainly broke the continuity of the channel's sense of place and identity.

CBEBBIES CRITERIA

2.5 'Deliver a mixed schedule of programmes, covering music and movement storytelling, make and do, simple science, natural history and puzzle-programmes as well as animation.'

The schedule is certainly mixed. Not only does it represent a range of genres: animation; live-action programmes with puppets and puppet like characters; (Teletubbies; Tweenies; Fimbles); magazine formats (Tikkabilla; The Shiny Show); storytelling (The Storymakers) and straightforward information (Fab Lab), but most of these consist of a further range of 'mini-genres' within the programme itself, all of them offering the above-named ingredients at some point. For instance The Storymakers consists of actual storytelling by a human presenter, animated cartoons and live action stories. The cartoons, The Blue Cow and Superbaby, are some of the very best, most imaginative, creative, witty, stylish children's programming I have seen in 30 years of watching children's television as an adult. Balamory, produced by BBC Scotland, in addition to its regular cast of characters, based around a real nursery school, and set in a fictional Scottish seaside town, includes singing, dancing, storytelling and dramatic performance, as well as craft making. For example the Balamory Christmas pantomime, had all the regular characters performing Cinderella to a real, pre-school audience in a theatre. Balamory is remarkable in many ways, but not least in its confident use of such 'old-fashioned' forms of storytelling – in itself educational, since many young viewers are not familiar with theatre-going.

High production values, as in Balamory's case, do not necessarily mean high-tech. A really remarkable example of low-tech storytelling appeared in the Saturday 10th July episode I watched. This was The Story Pole by Keith Brumpton (and thankyou Balamory for having clear, legible credits, unlike Nick Junior). The task here was to tell a simple version of the Rapunzel story, featuring characters drawn by the nursery children, and to work out how to put the pictures in order to make a coherent tale. Two of Balamory's regular characters, upper-class Archie, and African American Spencer, first arranged the pictures on an umbrella, which – as they demonstrated - would not work for linear storytelling, because an umbrella goes round and round. They then decided to arrange the pictures from top to bottom on a 'story pole' thus giving the story a visual beginning, middle and end. A clearer illustration of the narrative theory of structuralism could hardly have been found! This is not an entirely frivolous comment – teaching children about the shape and logic of narratives is part of their educational content – it is a form of media literacy. Which brings me to the next criterion:

2.6 'Strong educational and interactive strand throughout the day including peak viewing hours.'

In the case of preschool programming, and to a lesser extent older children's programming, everything can be seen to be educational. Hence, it is very difficult to separate educational content from entertainment content and the best preschool programmes are always both (Sesame Street, Mr Rodgers' Neighbourhood, Play School). Young children learn language from listening to others speak. They learn about the world, not through formal lessons, but through their interactions with their families and their surroundings including play. Good preschool education formalises these experiences and provides a wider range of activities and equipment to practice them than can be found in the average home – but all preschool education is still based on these essential informal experiences in children's lives. The BBC has always recognised this, and continues to do so. As Dorothy Prior put it:

CBeebies is linked to early learning goals, inspiring and enthusing and getting this running throughout every programme. For instance, in terms of music and movement, we have the Boogie Babies dance routines. (Interview with MMD, July 2004)

CBBC draws on the Government's Foundation Stage learning curriculum, and has an educational advisor, Clare Elstow. On peak hours, the BBC submission states 'CBeebies does not differentiate between peak and non peak, in that the pre-school family schedule is less dependent on traditional time keeping or 'peak hours' than families with older or grown up children.' This makes obvious sense and is another aspect of the recognition of the daily routines of its young audience.

2.7 Interactivity

According to the BBC's submission,

The channel developed and launched a digital interactive enhanced-text service during the first year, which is available 24 hours a day, across all platforms. This is a unique service in the market and reinforces CBeebies industry leadership. . . CBeebies has so far been unable to carry information for parents/carers on its unique interactive enhanced text service. However the same information has been offered to date on-line and the interactive services will be operational in 2004/5. (p. 23)

Television provides interesting sights and sounds – but educationally, it can only advise children to actually get up and move, it cannot do it for them. It can show children how to make things, but it cannot help them to do so. Hence its reputation for being a passive medium. In fact, a wealth of research, including that done for Sesame Street, has shown that television viewing is not passive in its effects on children's learning, nor are they passive while they watch it (See Palmer, 1986; Davies, 1989). However, nowadays, it is possible for children to make things happen through direct physical interaction with television, first by the use of the remote control to change channels, second by using 'the red button' to play games or to 'vote' and third to link with the internet (although this last is still in its rudimentary stages; at present, if you want to send an email, or link to the CBBC website, you have to go away and use a separate computer.) You can also still phone up and be heard on air, you can take part in live televised links – as in the CBBC 'stunts' and you can write letters, or send drawings, and have them shown on the programme. (This last has always been the case.) There is plenty of evidence that children do respond to the programmes in this interactive way from the emails, letters and phone calls constantly read out on the programmes, from the drawings and objects sent in which are shown on air and from website contributions to message boards etc.

Overtly educational genres provided by CBeebies include 'factual' programmes such as Fab Lab, Zingalong and Tikkabilla. Storytelling programmes also contain factual content, such as Balamory's explanations about weather, or Bob the Builder explaining how to make things. In Storymakers, there are excellent filmed inserts explaining concepts, shapes, objects and processes, for instance, a sequence about a potter making a model house with clay, using adjectives such as cold and slimy, squashy and squelchy, 'baked in a special oven called a kiln.'

According to the BBC report, the interactive enhanced text service had '45% awareness' in Sky households in November 2003 and usage in November 2003 had gone down from 18% to 14%. More is said about these interactive programme-linked services in the audience section below (5.3).

2.8 Social learning

A further key element of education in children's programming is social learning. The setting of good examples: people addressing each other respectfully and kindly; telling us we have to clean our teeth and wash our faces at the end of Bedtime Hour; being careful with sharp or heavy objects as in Bob the Builder – these are all factually direct forms of education. But there are other, less overt forms of social learning that children acquire from television – the kind of learning about relationships and social roles which come from regular exposure to recurring characters and stories (sometimes called 'stereotypes'). The BBC is careful to emphasise the diversity of its presenters, with representatives of ethnic minorities, Afro-Caribbean, African American, Asian, Chinese presenters and this also includes people with disabilities. There is a regular character in a wheel chair in Balamory. However, in my recent intensive exposure to hours on end of preschool programming, it became obvious (more so than if I'd only watched occasionally over several months) that some aspects of social representation leave something to be desired and these must be mentioned.

The first is the problem of gender. It seems to be routine in all storytelling, but particularly those involving puppets which don't have to be gender specific, to make authority figures male, for instance the Professor in Fab Lab, Dr. Otter in Dr. Otter, Bob the Builder, (although his partner Wendy the Builder has now been introduced), Fireman Sam etc. Caretaking roles are routinely taken by female characters. Just two small examples, the first from Tweenies, in which the senior sensible authority figure is the elderly 'Max'. In the episode I saw, Max escorts two small children, Holly and Haydon, into a meadow to explore the plants, insects and watercourses there. Later on in this episode there is some classic stereotyping. The plan is to make a model butterfly and the girl characters eagerly rush off to do it, while the boy characters say: 'Can we watch the video again, the bit with all the creepy crawlies?' The second example, Dr. Otter, consisted of a cast of characters in which the Doctor was a middle-aged male; his wife was a dithery housewife; the main protagonist was a male child character who got a splinter in his finger 'sliding down his Dad's (sic) ladder'. This may not matter so much when stereotypes are diluted as part of a wider range of class and gender representations, but it probably does matter when these kinds of characters are recurrent, every four hours, all day and every day, on children's digital channels. Some research on this might be useful. The shining exceptions to this are the two superb cartoon characters on The Story Makers, already mentioned, the wonderfully eccentric Blue Cow, who likes to travel on buses and have adventures, such as attending rock concerts by bands called The Hooves; and Super Baby, who works marvels with her special magic baby blanket. 'She's brave and she's true and she's somewhere near you. . . She's super, she's dooper, she really is a trooper.' And she is.

The other missing ingredient in the diversity portfolio is older people; presenters on children's television are not only relentlessly young, they are even more relentlessly

youthful – that is, bouncy, shiny, flirty, fashionably dressed and demotic in the way they speak. CBeebies is much better than CBBC in having a wider range of different ages represented. Tikkabilla has a grey-haired male presenter; the Story Makers has mature presenters, including two very authoritative black presenters, one male, one female. It also features mature adults in Balamory, Tweenies (as mentioned) and frequently in the filmed inserts used in Teletubbies, Tikkabilla, etc. The world of CBeebies seems closer to the world its audience lives in than that of CBBC (more below) and also to that of its competitors. Although the link presenters on Nickelodeon and Playhouse Disney are British and look and speak like people the children might know, this is not reinforced by the higher content of imported programming on the channels.

2.9 'A higher level of educational programming than its competitors.'

As mentioned above, it all depends on what you mean by education, but certainly the proportion of direct factual material is higher, and the amount of entertainment animation is less than on CBeebies' competitors, including its closest competitors like Nick Junior, and especially the whole range of programming including Fox Kids, Cartoon Network, where there are hardly any pretensions at all to education, information and in the case of some of the more boringly formulaic cartoons, even entertainment. The BBC uses its own programming genre categories, which are different from BARB's and they make more distinctions between different types of programming; for instance BARB has no News category, but includes News under 'Factual', whereas the BBC categorises News separately. The proportions of educational and schools programming on CBeebies (between April and November 2003) according to the BBC's categories, was 61%, and according to Barb it was 73.7% (the rest was categorised as 'entertainment and information.'). According to an independent report by Mark Oliver, in January 2004, these proportions compared with 47% educational and 50% educational on Disney Playhouse and Nick Junior respectively. In other words, however educational is defined, there is more of it on CBeebies. If it is defined in the broader sense I have discussed, there is even more generally informative, imaginative and creative material on CBeebies than on its competitors' channels, including the use of original songs and music, the 'family' of familiar puppets and characters, the imaginative use of link material, the thematic blocks such as 'The Fixit Hour', the language used by presenters speaking directly to the children, and so on. This is high quality material by any criterion that could be used, whether technically, creatively, educationally or prosocially, with the proviso about social stereotyping mentioned above.

2.10 'Around 90% of output must be made in the EU/EEA'

95.82% of CBeebies total broadcast in February 2003 and 95.78% in March 2004 originated in the EU/UK. (Figures provided by BBC's research dept, Chris Mundy). This represented 81.9% of all hours broadcast in Feb 03 and 82.29% of the hours broadcast in March 04.

The BBC's original commitment was to '90% British programming' and promised that 'just over three quarters of the channel's investment will be in *new* British programming'. Investment is not the same as output, of course – see also Condition 6 below. As the BBC claims, this proportion of home-grown programming does make it 'a

distinctive offering in the market.' According to a table in the BBC submission (p.33) in BBC Financial year 03/04 to date, 95% of eligible hours were UK/EU programming.

These figures come from the BBC's own submission, and could not be independently verified for the purposes of this review.

2.11 '80% of airtime must be directed to originally produced or commissioned programming'

In the submission it is claimed that 80% of 'all originated hours' were 'eligible hours'—the basis of these proportions is not very clear. It is also claimed that the BBC promised that a quarter of these 'eligible hours' would be 'new material hours'. In the figures given this proportion of 'new material hours' is actually claimed to be 41% in the first year from launch, rising to 57% in the current year to date. (see table on p. 17 of the BBC's submission). According to the table, investment in new British programming was 90%, but 90% of what is again not clear. These figures come from the BBC's own submission and could not be independently verified. However, just from my own calculations:

If CBeebies transmits 13 hrs a day [i.e. 6.0 am – 7pm] every day, that would be a total of 4,745 hours in a year (4,758 in a leap year). Of this, 5 hours is origination every day [1 block of four hours repeated 3 times a day, + bedtime hour] – so $5 \times 365 = 1,825$. What would this be in percentage terms?

2.12 'Must not be developed at the expense of programmes catering for this age group on BBC1 and BBC2'

The requirement that CBeebies 'Must not be developed at the expense of programmes catering for this age group on BBC1 and BBC2' was interpreted in two ways: firstly in terms of whether the diversity of the programming on BBC1 and 2 had diminished, and secondly in terms of audience. In terms of audience, see sections 2.13 and 3.9 below.

The BBC report acknowledges that: 'The condition ... has been compromised by a small reduction in the hours of pre-school programming on the analogue channels in the first year since launch. This was caused by changes to scheduling such as the Iraq War and increased parliamentary coverage, not by the launch of the new digital channel. In the second year however, the hours of pre-school programming on the analogue channels have increased by more than 30% to 668 hours with new dedicated pre-school slots on both BBC1 and 2. Indeed those channels have benefited from the extra investment in new programming which CBeebies has made by being able to show new programmes made for CBeebies.'

In the BBC's submission, it is further claimed:

Overall, the number of children's programme hours broadcast on the analogue channels has remained stable since launch with 1895 hours broadcast 2001/2002 (actual hours) and 1916 hours broadcast in 2002/2003 (actual hours). This is forecast to rise to 2145 hours in 2003/2004 (forecast based on slot duration) with regular slots on both channels.

The range of programming for *young* children was greater on CBeebies than on BBC1 and 2 in the small programming sample viewed. But, according to the BBC's submission, 'pre-school programming on the analogue channels has increased by more than 30% to 668 hours with new dedicated pre-school slots on both BBC1 and 2.' The report points out that new preschool slots on BBC1 and 2 included The Shiny Show (series 2), Tikkabilla (series A), Balamory (series 2) as well as first showings of some acquired titles including Boo! and Little Red Tractor. The argument from this is that the new investment in programming made possible by CBeebies benefited the broadcast channels too. As the report put it:

The pre-school programming on the analogue channels is branded CBeebies to maximise the impact of the brand. These zones on BBC ONE and BBC TWO provide a critical link between terrestrial audiences and the enriched digital television service that CBeebies offers. . . CBeebies on ONE and TWO showcases the 'best of' the CBeebies digital channel content offering. Talent is developed across both platforms and is not mutually exclusive. (pp 10-11)

2.13 Audience impact

According to the BBC's submission reach and share amongst children remained 'relatively stable' on BBC 1 and 2. Any slight losses on BBC2 could be attributed to the increase in takeup of digital in homes with children. In January 2001, 35% of children were in digital homes but in January 02, this had increased to 52%. Figures show that homes with young children have the highest rate of take up of digital television in the UK, with penetration amongst 4-5 year olds at 68%, compared to 56% for all individuals with multi-channel.

Figures provided by BBC Audience Research seem to suggest that, as viewing shares among all children for the digital Channels have gone up, so the shares for the 'Zones' (BBC1 and 2) have not gone down; neither have shares for other terrestrial channels, ITV and Five. For instance, in digital homes, between March 2002 and June 2004, share for CBBC went from 0.58 to 3.65 whereas share on BBC1 went from 9.34 to 10.46. Among 4-5 year olds the share for CBeebies in digital homes was 18.91 in March 02 and only 13.07 in June 04 whereas BBC1 remained pretty stable at 8.48 in March 02 and 8.15 in June 04.

The most recent figures (July 2004) from the BBC's audience research department show that viewing to CBBC output as a *whole* has decreased by more than 20% comparing May 2004 to May 2003. CBBC and CBeebies now account for nearly 30% of CBBC viewing in the after-school slot compared to 16% in 2003. In digital homes, where there is more diversity of children's channels, the CBBC channels now take a 13% share of viewing.

Thus, according to the most recent analyses by the BBC's Audience Research department, the BBC's children's service *overall* has lost viewing figures for the after school time slot in 2003/4 to their commercial competitors and the broadcast 'zones' appear to have lost audiences to the digital channels. The first statistic is another piece

of evidence that commercial competitors may not be suffering unduly from the entry of the BBC into the digital 'marketplace.' Nevertheless, the figures also show that the BBC's children's offerings overall continue to be popular with children generally. Fluctuations in viewing figures represent the greater range of options for children's attention, and the fact that there is only a limited number of hours in the day, and in my view these fluctuations should not be interpreted as a rejection of particular programmes or services.

In conclusion

According to the critical report commissioned by Nickelodeon on CBeebies, 'Overall, it is fair to say that the CBeebies schedule adhered to all points of the government remit in 2003.' The only objection the Nickelodeon researchers could find was to a 'Tweenies Day' on Aug Bank Holiday Monday 2003, where back-to-back episodes of Tweenies 'did not adhere to the remit because it was not a mix of different shows and genres.' If education is going to be a key point of distinction between the different channels, and this is to have a market implication, then a clear, generally-agreed, market definition of 'educational' is required – especially as used by channels such as Disney and Nickelodeon. The bar chart in BBC review of CBeebies (p13) from 'Mark Oliver Economic Impact Work, Jan 2004' says that 50% of Nick Junior is educational. But on what basis is this claim made? So, when the Secretary of State says that the BBC must have a 'higher proportion of educational programming', the question arises: higher than what? Is like being compared with like here?

3. PROGRAMMING ON CBBC: SCHEDULE, CONTENT, COMPETITORS AND HOW IT MEETS THE CRITERIA

CBBC must:

1. Deliver mixed schedule of news, drama, comedy entertainment and factual programmes through the day including peak viewing hours. Live programmes including news bulletins must be at the core of the schedule.
2. Online and interactive resources must support the service and shall be developed further as technology allows.
3. Similar balance of originated and acquired programmes through the day including peak hours
4. Around 75% output and investment in the EU/EEA
5. Not developed at the expense of programmes on BBC1 and 2

3.1 'Deliver mixed schedule of news, drama, comedy entertainment and factual programmes through the day including peak viewing hours. Live programmes including news bulletins must be at the core of the schedule.'

CBBC's schedule, by sharing the same name as the traditional broadcast schedule on BBC1 and 2, and by sharing many of the same programme titles, invites comparison with the 'Zones' broadcast in the after-school 'peak-time' slots on BBC1, with CITV as the main scheduled broadcast competitor. The scheduling for the broadcast and digital offerings for CBBC is different, and to some extent is likely to determine children's differential responses to the material.

To take one example, Wednesday 21st July 2004: the CBBC schedule on BBC1 starting at 3.45 pm had Dennis the Menace; Tom and Jerry (cartoons); followed by two British made dramas, the comedy Fairly Odd Parents and the fantasy drama, Cavegirl, followed by the talent competition/gameshow, The Agents, followed by Newsround, ending at 5.35: five different genres and six different programmes in less than two hours. The CBBC channel is able to spread its offerings over the whole day, and in the after-school slot, has a slightly less diverse range of offerings, though it does have the advantage of being able to use both the 5.30 and 6 pm slots for original factual (Xchange) and drama (Tracy Beaker) programmes. The CBBC Channel schedule is the same every day, unlike the BBC1 schedules, which vary from day to day. It is my view, although research with children would be needed to support it, that the after-school genre-mix, condensed into a convenient 'available-to-view' period, is more tailored to the lifestyle of the school-age child than a day-long digital 'mix.' For instance, one of the children I interviewed, 6 year old Ishbel, loves The Worst Witch (CITV, 4.25 daily) so her regular viewing date, when she gets home from school is with a terrestrial offering, not a digital one.

An account of the CBBC channel schedule from the BBC submission is given below:

Output delivered has spanned the full range of programmes from drama to news and animation to factual.¹ This mixed genre schedule goes to the heart of the channel proposition and creates the distinction between The CBBC Channel and other offerings in the market. The CBBC Channel is the only channel to offer such a diverse range of genres for this age group, including news and live programming at the core of its schedule . . . :

Broadcast hours for The CBBC Channel are 0700 to 1900. The schedule is driven by simplicity and clarity in order to promote it effectively in the competitive children's market place. It comprises stacks of programmes where shows start on the hour or half hour.

There is no industry definition of peak viewing for the 6-12 year old audience but we consider that the most popular viewing periods are before and after school and have therefore defined peak as 0700 – 0830 and 1600 – 1900. (pp 9-10)

In my chosen viewing period of mid July, (the week of 17th-23rd July) the following schedule was available to me on CBBC in the afternoons, Monday to Friday:

12.55 Newsround	Genre: News/Factual
1.0 Chucklevision	Entertainment
2.0 Exchange	Factual
2.30 Against all odds	Don't know – didn't watch, and no information available in listings
2.55 Newsround	News/Factual
3.0 Animadness	Animation
4.0 Nelly Nut	Live Animation
4.30 The Basil Brush Show	Entertainment
4.55 Newsround	News/Factual
5.0 Kerching!	Comedy drama
5.30 Xchange	Factual/Entertainment
6.0 Tracy Beaker	Comedy drama

This was fairly strong on factual material, but rather light on drama – given the BBC's traditional strengths in this area. The requirement to use the archive does not seem to have been fulfilled to the extent that it might have been, given the BBC's impressive back catalogue. For instance, in June, I needed to get access to videotapes of two recent drama serials broadcast on BBC1, *Face at the Window* (2003) and *Feather Boy* (2004), for a chapter I was writing about television drama. The only way I could access them was to borrow them from a helpful producer. There was nowhere in the digital universe where I could have recorded them. The BBC1 broadcast schedule was more diverse in its drama offerings with *Lizzie Maguire*, (Monday); *Jeopardy* (Tuesday); *Fairly Odd Parents and Cavegirl* (Wednesday); *Tracy Beaker and Jeopardy*, (Thursday) and *Fairly Odd Parents and Cavegirl* (Friday). CITV too, offered high quality drama – with the excellent *Worst Witch* on every day.

In its submission on drama, the BBC claims:

The BBC made a commitment to build an ambitious portfolio of UK-based drama, including shorter runs of comedy and longer runs of popular drama, using the efficiencies of high volume production. Our drama will be mainly UK-based but we also plan to acquire exclusive rights to showcase the best drama from around the world. Drama will make up nearly 20% of the

output. . . . The CBBC Channel has built an ambitious portfolio of UK based drama forming 16% of the schedule in the first year, increasing to 22% in the year to date. The CBBC Channel offers the widest ranging selection of comedy and drama programming available for this age group. (p. 26)

On Tuesday 13th July, I had a very entertaining morning's viewing with Tracy Beaker, The Queen's Nose (a superb British cast, including Paula Wilcox, Stephen Moore and John Fortune, and an army of goats – the sort of high-risk production feature that only very confident drama producers can attempt), and Big Kids (about parents who keep turning into children, with again, a starry cast including Shakespearean Imogen Stubbs). However, this excellent home-grown drama menu was all comedy. Serious dramas, like Face at the Window, and costume dramas, such a strong feature of terrestrial CBBC over the years, did not feature at all. These, of course, are 'short-run', often only six episodes and thus cannot be stripped over weeks and months, but there ought to be a place in the digital universe where they could be show-cased – perhaps a CBBC Gold?

3.2 Factual material

I was able to watch Xchange and a number of editions of Newsround – the main factual offerings during my viewing period, so a smaller range of factual titles than on the broadcast afternoon schedules. However, Xchange, with two shows morning and evening, and a repeat of the morning show at lunchtime, included a wide range of different informative elements and was clearly based on wide research. The day I watched it with a family, it had a special guest, an 'amazing musical talent' called Chance, a 17 year old jazz musician trumpeter and singer from New Orleans. This was an opportunity to put across a variety of informative material: a film sequence about three young people getting together and forming a band and their visit to a recording studio. Then a live instructional piece with Chance being asked about technique: high and low notes; bending and sliding; the use of mouthpieces; dynamics, soft or loud, with young musicians in the studio having to copy him. This was extremely informative, well explained and demonstrated and it benefited from the 'master-class' approach; it took the audience seriously and assumed, rightly if my co-viewers were anything to go by, that they would be interested in the musical technicalities. It finished with a jazz number from Chance with the children in the studio joining in. This was a great piece of performance and educational in the best sense, showing the pleasure, as well as the skill, to be got from unfamiliar (to many children) musical styles, show tunes, jazz and big band music. The presenter, Stevie Wilson, held all this together well and had a pleasant and, thankfully, non-frenetic style of address.

3.3 Quality of content

With regard to the older children, CBBC is harder to characterise by a sense of audience. Tracy Beaker and the Queens Nose were recurrent and the channel content seemed to be particularly appealing to girls of 7 and upwards – a point noted in the David Graham report. Although this has to be a subjective judgement, during my few days of continuous viewing, I felt there was a problem with the tone. Some of the presenters do not seem to have a clear idea of how to address the audience or who the audience is. CBBC and CITV on broadcast terrestrial have a more confident and relaxed style with the audience, clearly from years of experience – but it seems to me from my brief

sampling (and I recognise the limitations of this brevity) that this experience has yet to be transferred from CBBC on BBC1 and 2 to the channel. There are many examples of tastelessness, e.g. vomiting on Dick and Dom in da Bungalow and some complaints from parents (see audience section below). This show is funny and appealing, but it does seem to go a little too far sometimes in humiliating the children it features. Of course children enjoy knockabout silliness and teasing – but they value other qualities too. There is a lack of gentleness and courtesy – both qualities abounding on CBeebies. Two teenage girl presenters doing 'Don't clock the fox' seemed particularly lacking in a sense of their audience and also used bad grammar (something designed to send parents up the wall): 'ain't' and 'you was' are not constructions we should be hearing anywhere in the television output, although regional accents are fine. Some of the parents quoted in the BBC's commissioned audience research from Sherbert in April 2004 also have concerns about the presenters: 'Sometimes if I am in the room and the presenters are on I just have to leave again!' (Mother of one to two year old children, Winchester.)

3.4 Diversity and regionalism

The Secretary of State required 'That each [BBC digital] service shall stimulate, support and reflect the diversity of cultural activity in the UK within the defined scope of the service' and that for both channels a condition 'a proportion of programme production [*not specifying how much*] must be allocated to companies based outside London'.

According to the BBC's submission,

No other children's brand in the UK provides such an extensive range of multi-cultural and diverse programming. The channel also reflects the diversity of cultural activity in modern day Britain. CBeebies works hard to ensure a diverse mix of children and presenters in terms of disability, gender and ethnicity. CBeebies have developed a family of on-air presenters who come from a diverse range of ethnic and social backgrounds, and these channel faces present our audiences with role models they can trust and with whom they can connect.

The BBC commitment in its application was that 'BBC Scotland will be a significant provider of programming, as will the BBC regions and regional independent companies,' and in its final submission, it pointed out that the BBC 'has overarching commitments to levels of regional and production to which CBeebies contributes.' The report points out that BBC Scotland 'is a significant provider of new programming.' Apparently, approximately 30% of programme spend was allocated to Scotland for programmes including Balamory and Zingalong, but Wales and Northern Ireland appear to have missed out.

The BBC's submission claims that

The CBBC Channel has done much to ensure that its output reflects the diversity of cultural activity in the UK. [examples of *Kerching!* and *Tracy B*]... [It] actively encourages the recruitment of staff from diverse backgrounds, such staff in turn influence programme content, aiming to reflect the

diversity of cultural activity in the UK. ... externally, we have taken part in ethnic minority talent events. (p. 40)

However, it's obvious that there is one group of people almost totally unrepresented on the channel and that (with one or two exceptions) is people over the age of 21, or who look as if they're over 21. There are no elderly or middle-aged people, except in buffoonish roles in the comedy dramas, and there are hardly any people who look like most children's parents or teachers. The CBBC channel is a less recognisable social world than CBeebies, and it is difficult to formulate a credible sense of place. Looking at the scantily-dressed presenters, you have to ask: Who are these people and where are they going? It's 4 o'clock in the afternoon and they look as if they're going to a nightclub. What kind of place is it, and is it the kind of place parents would want to leave their kids? Compared to the broadcast schedules on BBC1, which do have a solid sense of continuity and recognisable space, the answer could be 'I'm not too sure.' The frenetic, fun-filled tone of the Channel also does not always recognise the element of seriousness in the child audience – a factor that has turned up again and again in my own research with children, including my study with 1400 children in England and Wales carried out for the BBC itself (Davies, 2001)⁶ and some recent research I carried out on children and news, in which children passionately objected to being, as they put it, 'patronised'. In this research, the middle-aged Jon Snow, then presenting Channel 4's now defunct schools news programme, First Edition, was named by many children as their favourite newscaster. It is noteworthy that the longest-serving Newsround reporter, Lizo, was the only named person to be recognised in a piece of qualitative research about CBBC carried out for the BBC by Spinach in 2003. A more adult style of address, assuming the child audience as intelligent and mature, was found in the presenters on Xchange and the valiant presenters who presented live coverage from a very drizzly Sport Aid event in Edinburgh on Saturday 10th July.

In its submission, the BBC acknowledged that it has not been able to fulfil all its commitments in the CBBC channel.

The CBBC Channel has met almost all the conditions and commitments set out by the Secretary of State and the BBC at launch, with the following exception: The higher than expected costs of co-production have made it difficult for the channel to meet the commitment requiring that the channel exploit opportunities for co-production and third party investment. However, the alternative approach of pre-buying has delivered excellent results and in a way that provides better value for money. This is covered in more detail in Section 3.3.6 Animation, but The CBBC Channel realises that going forward it must work even harder with the UK animation sector to stimulate and support the industry and in particular, to investigate new third party investment through its UK based programming and rich genre mix. (p. 4)

In my interviews with the production team, Dorothy Prior pointed out that CBBC had problems at launch because of the shortage of long-run programmes that were available to be 'stripped' across the lengthier digital schedules. This is a problem that can obviously be corrected with time, so long as the resources are available for new production. However, as noted, maybe more use could be made of the archives. The 6-

12 audience is notoriously difficult to characterise, too, because the developmental span ranges from small children who are barely out of toddler-dom, to sophisticated pre-teens. It is difficult to find a tone of voice that would reach the whole of this range, and that's leaving aside other differences of region, class, ethnicity, taste, personality and so on. But the BBC's long traditions of Newsround, Blue Peter, and even Saturday morning mayhem programmes, have developed an expertise in talking to children intelligently, so it should not be impossible to get it right.

3.5 Distinctiveness from competition

From my zapping to other channels during my CBBC viewing time, there was very little competition for this range of material on other children's digital channels. On the afternoon when I was entertained by Tracy Beaker, The Queen's Nose and Big Kids on CBBC, Nickelodeon, the only serious competitor, was showing Spongebob Squarepants, an American cartoon, The Sleepover Club and Sabrina the Teenage Witch, both American teen dramas. There was no factual material, whether News, or magazine (c.f. Xchange) at all in their schedule. In this sense, CBBC is highly distinctive compared to other digital children's channels aimed at 6-12 year olds. It also has no ads.

3.6 'Online and interactive resources must support the service and shall be developed further as technology allows'

Online is potentially a fruitful development, but at the moment, is separate from transmitted output. Some websites, such as the Newsround website, may be widely used particularly at times of crisis. Young children would need help from parents to utilise some of the sites, as you need to be literate to use the web fully. Emailing and texting are also popular forms of communication with the programmes, both on the broadcast zones and the digital channels. The interactive possibilities of games are a little primitive it seems to me, but obviously capable of development, and all the children I spoke to were proficient with the remote control and how to use it. (See comments in CBeebies section.) In one of the families I visited, I asked the children, aged six, ten and twelve, to demonstrate some of the interactive features of the remote control, for playing games. This is described in more detail in the audience section, 5.3 below.

X-Id membership is 'a key part of Xchange's remit'. According to the BBC's submission,

This builds on strands such as X-perts where children and guests review the latest books, television programmes and films; bringing children up to date and fostering a critical faculty at a young age. Similarly, Tips and Tricks offers expert advice in various areas, in a fun and engaging way. Dream On makes young children's dreams come true, from swimming with dolphins to driving a bus. (p. 23)

On the day I watched it, I greatly enjoyed its use of child critics – these were confident, opinionated, probably quite unjust in some of their strictures, but it made for lively, intelligent, entertaining television. For instance, commenting on the video of Dry Your Eyes, by Streets, they remarked, 'really original, but you need to cheer up.' Xchange also

features the time-honoured interactive procedure of awarding prizes to viewers for correctly guessing puzzles and quizzes.

Dorothy Prior wants it to be even more interactive and linked with after school activities through connections with after-school clubs. This sounds like a very promising development, especially if it involves more lively comment and entertainment from children themselves, guided by talented and authoritative adults, as in the programme I watched.

3.7 'Similar balance of originated and acquired programmes throughout the day including peak hours'

According to the BBC:

This target was set to ensure the channel did not increase the provision of acquired programming during peak hours. ... Whilst this ratio dipped slightly in peak hours in 2002-03, the balance between originated and acquired is still strongly biased towards originated programming. As the channel beds down, we can continue to commission more originated output as in the year to date, where the balance is 3.7:1 in favour of originated programming.

It is worth asking who is watching CBBC in the daytime in term-time? 'It is estimated that there are approximately 500,000 four to fifteen year old children out of school each day (figures for England and Wales only). These include home educated children, children excluded from school, sick children, and others . The CBBC Channel provides high quality programming for these groups throughout the day including blocks of curriculum based output in Class TV.' ... and of course 'Some 50,000 school children are still believed to truant every day' – *Guardian*, Feb 11 2004] These requirements come from the information in the BBC's submission and at this stage, could not be independently verified.

3.8 'around 75% output and investment in the EU/EEA'

It is worth noting that this is less than for CBeebies and some rationalisation for the difference might be required. The BBC Annual Report states that 82% of output has been made in EU/EEA. It would be useful to know how much is from mainland Europe. Does CBBC look at what French/ Germans/ Czechs/ Poles/Spanish etc are producing?. This information from the BBC's report could not be independently verified.

3.9 'This service must not be developed at the expense of programmes on BBC1 and 2'

This requirement was also reviewed in terms of both programming and audience as in 2.11 above. From my sampling, the programming range on BBC1 (and 2) remains more diverse than on the Channels (see section 3.1 above).

According to the BBC: 'The CBBC Channel has not been developed at the expense of the programme blocks for this age group on BBC1 and BBC2. Actual hours transmitted since

launch have increased from 1308 (actual hours) in 2001/2002 to a forecasted 1477 hours in 2003/2004 (based on slot duration). Year to year channel programming requirements change in line with audience needs and requirements and the CBBC Channel programming on BBC1 and 2 reflect these trends.' Does this last sentence mean that when it comes to BBC1 and 2, ultimately the BBC Children's Dept is in the hands of the channel controllers/planners? How would this affect commitments?

With regard to audience figures, as mentioned in section 2.12 above, most recent figures (July 2004) from the BBC's audience research department show that viewing to CBBC output as a whole has decreased by more than 20% comparing May 2004 to May 2003. In digital homes the CBBC channels now take a 13% share of viewing. As discussed, these analyses show that the BBC overall has lost viewing figures for the after school time slot in 2003/4 to their commercial competitors and that some child viewing has shifted from the broadcast 'zones' to the digital channels.

4. AUDIENCE RESPONSES: OFFICIAL FIGURES AND SURVEYS

This section looks at firstly, the BBC's own comments on its desired audience, and also at some of the figures from BARB, supplied to me by BBC Research. Secondly it refers to some qualitative research carried out by the BBC, including emails sent in as part of the public consultation about the BBC. Thirdly it refers to some informal research watching the channels with children, which I carried out myself.

According to the BBC's submission:

Audience Performance

While the channel [CBBC] started off slowly, audience performance has improved significantly over the last year. The channel has risen from being ranked 13th at launch in terms of reach and share to tie first overall with Boomerang in December 2003 (non pre-school) with 3.5% share. Weekly 15 minute reach (4-15, digital homes) has increased from 5.8% (270,000) at the end of the first year to 14% (808,000) in November 2003. Its average audiences were 21,000 in November 2003. (p. 4)

I asked Dorothy Prior why children should watch the channels rather than BBC1 or 2 and she pointed out that, given the forthcoming digital universe and the switching off of analogue, 'we would rather they watched digital – we have to teach them to be discerning users of the media and after school is always the peak time. . . Xchange can link into afterschools clubs.' Chris Mundy, head of BBC Research, pointed out: 'Competitors would rather they watched CBBC digital because of the EPG and the zapping factor.'

Below is a brief summary of the reach of the two channels, compared to their main competitors.

4.1 Reach of CBeebies and CBBC compared to competition: See charts in Appendix

Comparison between CBeebies and Nick Junior.

CBeebies has gone up from a reach of 540,000 and average weekly reach of 9.5% of all children in Mar 02 to 1,034,000 and average weekly reach of 16% in April 2004. The highest reach was 17.9% in Feb 04.

Nick Junior went from 272,000 in Feb 02 and reach of 4.8% to 467,000 and 7.2% reach.

Comparison between CBBC and Boomerang

CBBC is compared with Boomerang; since Jan 04 it has overtaken it and in Apr. 04 its numbers were 1,045,000 and a reach of 16.2 compared to Boomerang's 922,000 and 14.3.

In the overall chart of all channels in March 04, CBeebies and CBBC were doing massively better in terms of share and minutes watched compared to the competition.

Competitive set figures: these tables supplied by the BBC show the comparisons between the number of 'impacts', i.e. one person watching one thirty second ad, before and after CBeebies was launched. These figures don't show a negative impact from the launch of the BBC digital channels which suggests that the BBC is not having a negative commercial impact on the competition.

4.2 Email responses from the Digital Services Review

The DCMS also supplied me with email responses to the Digital Services Review. Of the 25 emails about the children's services, 14 were wholly positive, 9 were mixed and two were negative. An example of a positive is this from the mother of two children aged five years and six months. They watched CBeebies as part of a Sky Package.

'Programmes are high quality and I trust their content. . . . Programmes are used in our house to prompt discussions about different situations i.e. Bobinogs explores social skills and how to interact with others; whilst Big Cook, Little Cook gives us recipe ideas which we have subsequently tried. The CBeebies website is also fantastic and the five year old can navigate it with ease.' However, this mother had a 'gripe' about the interactive element on the digital TV. 'It doesn't seem to be updated enough with different choices of games.'

Another mother of an under-three agreed that 'CBeebies shows some wonderful preschool programmes' but thought Wiggly Park was 'a waste of public money' and didn't like being 'bombarded with a ridiculous amount of trailers each morning.'

A 14 year old writing from Northern Ireland thought it was 'good to have a channel for children but this particular channel seems to be aimed at young children and not at those of my age.' She also objected to the fact that more programmes were not set in Northern Ireland. 'I think it is appalling that on a comprehensive channel there are no programmes based in my country. There should be at least one, showing how life here, in Northern Ireland, during conflict and peace time, affects all your young viewers in this part of the United Kingdom.' This call for recognition of local differences was also reflected in some of the children I spoke to in County Fermanagh (see below.)

In general, both these emails and the qualitative research commissioned by the BBC is very positive about CBeebies, but it is harder to please the wider range of ages and backgrounds in the CBBC target audience.

4.3 Informal viewing with children by MMD, JULY 2004

I watched children's TV and discussed it with two groups of children, a family of three children aged 6, 9 and 11 and their mother in London, and a group of 10 Northern Irish children aged between 5 and 8, in Co. Fermanagh, organised by a teacher in her home (it was the school holidays, and these were children she knew, not her own). The first family group had Freeview, and had formerly had access to Sky, but not now.

In the family group, the daughter, aged 6, did not want to watch the Channels at the beginning of my visit (3.30 pm) because: 'My favourite show, is The Worst Witch, (CITV, afternoons)'. So we had to watch that first. She also mentioned High Five (channel Five),

and Discovery Kids. This was a family who claimed not to watch television very much, but there appeared to be almost nothing they had not heard of and they were able to describe all the programmes they mentioned. The brothers liked The Simpsons and High Five and had some interesting comments on advertising – all these comments stress the irritation of repetition:

The younger brother (9) said: 'They should ban advertising. You see it over and over again and you get bored with it.' His sister had also noticed that 'Tracey Beaker is on again and again and again.' The eleven year old echoed parental comments in the BBC's qualitative research, stressing the distinctiveness of an advertising-free zone: 'The BBC is good because they only have adverts for their own programmes.'

It was noteworthy that these extremely media-literate children did not connect advertising with the ability to fund programming: Said the eleven year old: 'Advertising's giving people money, paying to put it on their programme, but it's not necessary. They have adverts so they can show their merchandise.' And once again, the objection about repeats came in: 'If they didn't have ads there'd be more time for more programmes and less repeats' (nine year old). As his brother remarked: 'When they're repeated over and over you don't take any notice of them.'

We then watched the CBBC channel and caught the end of Basil Brush (popular) and the Xchange programme mentioned above, in which there was an absorbing and informative piece about different kinds of wind instruments which held all the children's attention.

4.4 Interactivity: playing games using 'the red button'.

I took the opportunity of being in a family to try out some interactive activities with the remote control, but it is unlikely that the children would have wanted to do this if I had not asked them to; they would have preferred to continue watching the programmes. They obligingly played the 'odd one out' game based on Bob the Builder, a Tweenies game, and a colour sorting game, based on Postman Pat. They explained that the games varied every month or so, not every day - which, again, might lead to complaints of repetitiveness. The games themselves, too, provide fewer options, than, say, colour and shape sorting with three dimensional toys, such as 'postboxes' or jigsaws. They maximise the limitations of the current technology as much as possible, but they don't encourage the full range of skills that actual toys would encourage. My own view (and it's a personal one, based on decades of being a TV viewer, so a contemporary parent might feel differently) is that television's great strength is dramatic storytelling, which requires sitting still and listening carefully. If you want interactivity, you will use some other medium, such as toys or a computer, or a musical instrument. However, further interactive possibilities, based on the TV programmes can be found on the websites, and it's probably important that if interactivity is seen as a major criterion, then the programme presenters should draw children's and parents' attention to the websites and their resources. The children's mother made a similar point to mine about the value of televised storytelling: 'These kids love the Chronicles of Narnia, which we get out of the video store.'

We then watched CBBC's Kerching!, with its laughter track and what looked like a strong American influence – reminiscent of The Fresh Prince of Bel Air, then Xchange, then two back-to-back episodes of Tracy Beaker to which, interestingly, the boys stayed glued, but from which the girl wandered away, and started playing with a drawing package on the family computer, in the same room. Their mother said: 'They will watch an episode of Tracy Beaker and they watched the whole of Five children and It. But there's a wander-away factor with CBBC channel. They'll watch Blue Peter all the way through, though.' I asked the children what they thought of news and factual programmes and all three said that they liked Newsround, but not adult news; they don't use the news-based websites very much.

4.5 Children in Northern Ireland

The second group in Ballinamallard, County Fermanagh, varied in the provision they had at home. Five had digital channels, (four with Sky, one with Freeview) five did not. We watched the BBC2 daytime schedule together in a local teacher's house. These children also had access to RTE's after-school children's schedule, The Den, and several of them said they watched this from choice – an indication of local, cultural preference being a factor in children's viewing choices. So we also watched some of The Den together. It was interesting that, for these Northern Irish children, a sequence showing the map of Ireland made little sense to them and they could not identify where we were in the map. Just as British channels do not acknowledge the considerable presence of Irish children in their audience, so RTE's Den does not acknowledge the presence of Northern Irish children in theirs. In its references to festivals and fairs going on during the holidays, it did not mention events that children north of the border might be able to get to. Digital channels, with their less precise sense of location, of time and space, might be able to remedy this kind of broadcasting separation and to talk to and represent children in all parts of their 'footprints'. This could be a recommendation.

Children were aged from 5-8: two five year olds; four six year olds; two seven year olds and two eight year olds.

They were asked to name all the children's channels they could think of and between them came up with the following:

Boomerang
Cartoon Network
CBeebies
Nickelodeon
Pop Plus – 'load of cartoons'
Nick toons TV
Sky One – children's channel 'because everybody watches because the Simpsons are on it.'
Disney channel
Toon Disney
Playhouse Disney
Fox Kids
CITV
Toonami

The Den on 'ordinary channels', channel 6, RTE 2.

Plus

ITV

BBC1

BBC2

BBC3

Nick Junior

Despite prompting, no-one mentioned the CBBC channel. Children mentioned several BBC programmes but didn't identify the fact that the channel is continuous whereas the zone isn't. Nobody could identify a channel without advertisements. Thus there seemed to be a problem with the distinctiveness, at least in terms of its recognition factor compared to other channels, of the CBBC channel. They mentioned favourite programmes, several of which could only be seen on digital channels:

Malcolm in the Middle

The Simpsons

Lizzie Maguire

Futurama

Big Cook and Little cook, CBeebies

football

Yu Giu and Spiderman

Sponge Bob Squarepants

Everybody was familiar with the 'red button' and knew how to use it. Three people used it for games. e.g. the Sponge Bob Squarepants game. They played games during the ads.

All the children had a computer at home and two children's brothers had extra computers in their bedrooms. Computers, for them, had a variety of uses: playing games; 'writing things'; games on CDs which were 'more grown up' like Star Wars; 'painting'; 'art'. According to the children, parents use computers for 'buying airline tickets' and older siblings use them for homework. (Parents were not present). They did not mention programme-related websites.

Although these sessions with families and children were only impressionistic, it was obvious from both groups that the children were familiar with, and confident about, the digital television universe – even although they couldn't always distinguish different elements of it; they were adept at using remote controls, and some aspects of computer technology, and they were aware of other aspects. The digital world seems to be a familiar place that holds no fears for them.

5. SUMMARY

5.1 Distinctiveness from competition

In terms of distinctiveness, the BBC has one very big advantage over the new commercial channels: the fact that the parents of their target audiences grew up with the BBC's model of children's television (also adopted by ITV and the other commercial channels). Given that cultural traditions tend to be handed on from parent to child, especially among the middle classes, parents who liked CBBC as children are likely to want this for their own children. The new channels don't have this advantage – and Americans didn't have any proper mixed genre children's TV until the multichannel era, apart from Sesame Street, which is now, alas, nowhere to be found on British TV.

In terms of the competition: Nick Junior and Boomerang are doing some good programmes, and if I had small children I would certainly want them to sample these. From the point of view of serving the young audience and its parents, it is better for children's providers to have a co-operative relationship, as with CITV and CBBC: the claim always was that they needed each other, and in fact, many of the personnel and ideas and independent production were mutual. CBBC/Beebies and Nickelodeon and Disney Playtime are all doing a good job for children and it would not be in the public interest to lose any of them. The BBC is especially important to the whole universe of children's television because it is, and always has been, a major source of expertise, innovation and training for the whole industry, and it makes sense to continue to support it for this reason. All the commercial channels benefit from the production and training ethos provided – and guaranteed, thanks to the license fee – by the BBC's institutionalisation of children's programming as a major department.

For example, in the BBC's submission, it is pointed out:

The CBBC Channel has developed many new and innovative production techniques, from the use of cool lights to reduce heat in studios to pioneering internet transfer of drama rushes for viewing.

New ways of working are constantly explored, such as the innovative use of shared studio facilities, different schedules that sustain long-running series in the most efficient manner, the use of self-operation techniques within craft supported areas, and working methods that support training initiatives for craft staff as well as production teams. (p. 27)

This was seen as a point of pride and again, BBC distinctiveness, by the production staff we interviewed. According to Dorothy Prior, 'people who work in house regard ourselves as public servants'. In devising innovative and imaginative material for children, they work closely with manufacturers, and the technical developments arising from these co-operations 'go to everybody.' 'Public service broadcasting must lead innovation and use what we learn as leverage for the whole industry'.

BBC programmes are expected to be differentiated from the competition by quality; home-grownness; distinctiveness from other channels; educational value; and lack of adverts. All these things are there. Quality can be hard to define objectively; one issue

for me (though others might disagree) is that there are few really charismatic presenters. Dave Benson Phillips has dignity and gravitas as well as good humour; also Byron on The StoryMakers. Julie Nimmo Wilson on Balamory has the perfect combination of teacherly sensibleness and niceness required to hold the show together. Stevie Wilson on Xchange also handled his child and adult interviewees confidently and didn't talk down to the audience, but the Newsround presenters on CBBC Channel seemed to be too child-like to me, especially given the seriousness of some of the material they were presenting.

The lack of adverts is an enormous plus for the adult viewer, a point made repeatedly by parents in the qualitative research, but also by some children; the ads on the other channels are either for junk food or for insurance. Not attractive. A parent quoted in some qualitative research carried out for the BBC by Sherbert in April 2004, said: 'I love the fact that on CBeebies there are no commercials, that's a big plus. I think it's disgusting the way they advertise on kids' television.' (Mother of children aged one to six years, Winchester).

5.2 How might they be developed in future?

In a submission to the review of the services, MEP Carole Tongue, who has had a longstanding interest in children's broadcasting services, pointed out:

The important thing to recognise is that the fierce battle being waged in this country for children's viewers is being conducted between a broadcasting territory with a historic focus on its own audience and a continent which has always looked beyond its own boundaries towards global expansion and some would argue, dominance. (p 3)

Tongue makes a number of suggestions for inclusions in future children's services, in particular a recognition of the European dimension:

European programmes, including fairy tales

Films from children's film festivals

Co-operative programmes between European countries such as The Animals of Farthing Wood

S4C's 'ambitious animation project', Fairytales of the World.

6. SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations arising from the above review:

- More use of the archive, especially of the BBC's own programmes which were funded by the license fee and as such, should be freely accessible to the public who paid for them: a CBBC 'Gold' channel would be welcome.
- More use of European programming e.g. S4C's Fairytales of the World and programmes made in mainland Europe
- A clearer, more comprehensive, industry-wide definition of 'educational' to enable more valid comparisons between channels.
- Co-operation as well as competition between providers in terms of recognising the need to nurture talent and technical innovation for the whole industry of children's programming and to acknowledge the needs of the whole child audience.
- Less stereotyping in content and a more diverse range of types of adult presenter, especially in the presentation of serious content.
- Continued acknowledgement of the value of traditional forms of TV interactivity, such as joining in with singing and actions, dancing and answering questions. The most popular form of contact with children is still direct address to the camera
- More awareness of the general ecology of the digital universe, especially for older children, for instance links and trails for adult BBC educational programming.
- Continued political and industry recognition of the BBC's role in stimulating innovation, creativity and training in the industry as a whole – especially in the children's area: commissioning independents, supporting animation, the back-catalogue and tradition of programming going back to the 1950s.
- In terms of training and research, more links with training programmes and educational resources in the Further and Higher Education systems, for instance, dedicated scholarships for people who want to specialise in children's production.
- Digital channels need to acknowledge the presence in the audience of children in all parts of their 'footprints', including non-UK citizens; the European dimension also comes in here.
- Further development of the online interactive dimension; the websites have great potential which not all parents may be aware of.
- Is CBBC the right name for the older children's channel? The fact that the children in Northern Ireland, who could name all the other children's channels, didn't identify CBBC as a separate channel could mean that children find it less easy to find this channel than others. Should the name be changed?
- Sustain the pro-child ethos demonstrable throughout the organisation, including sustaining the unified management structure of CBBC with all branches of children's programming, including online provision, under one 'umbrella'. The concentration of these activities in one place, BBC Television Centre's East Tower, makes CBBC a real, not just a 'virtual', place, dedicated to children, and that shows on the screen.

From my contacts with a variety of people working in and for BBC, it seems laudable that the management structure of CBBC has been unified and that all branches of children's programming, including online provision, are under one 'umbrella' (a 'Daisy' structure). All these activities have been brought together in a single environment - the BBC Television Centre's East Tower. CBBC is, indeed, a real place, where children matter; that shows on the screen and adds public value.

APPENDIX

All data is based on digital homes only - Reach is 15+ consecutive mins

ALL KIDS

CBeebies - launched 11th
Feb 2002

Audiences	CBeebies			Nick JR		
	AvWkRch(000)	AvWkRch%	AvMins(Viewers)	AvWkRch(000)	AvWkRch%	AvMins(Viewers)
Mar-06	540	9.5	108.3	272	4.8	79.29
Apr-06	562	9.8	97.51	319	5.5	71.38
May-06	626	10.9	89.11	293	5.1	76.84
Jun-06	599	10.4	92.21	318	5.5	80.85
Jul-06	670	11.7	97.18	308	5.4	75.15
Aug-06	666	11.6	106.82	304	5.3	68.92
Sep-06	752	13.1	90.98	320	5.6	60.11
Oct-06	912	16.1	94.47	335	5.9	63.89
Nov-06	976	17.2	87.64	359	6.3	61.58
Dec-06	899	15.7	91.25	379	6.6	66.94
Jan-07	946	18.1	88.5	414	7.9	67.07
Feb-07	918	17.6	88.57	403	7.7	65.42
Mar-07	699	11.8	80.78	280	4.7	65.84
Apr-07	852	14.4	88.68	327	5.5	69.81
May-07	858	14.4	91.74	305	5.1	74.87
Jun-07	869	14.6	84.48	314	5.3	74.3
Jul-07	854	14.5	92.96	362	6.2	82.08
Aug-07	860	14.5	92.81	367	6.2	92.64
Sep-07	919	15.3	86.93	414	6.9	83.44
Oct-07	982	16.4	83.77	474	7.9	80.86
Nov-07	1046	17.2	85.44	533	8.7	81.9
Dec-07	989	15.9	87.91	468	7.5	78.23
Jan-08	1014	16.4	82.88	514	8.3	82.86
Feb-08	1116	17.9	83.74	599	9.6	80.89
Mar-08	1080	16.8	77.04	506	7.9	79.83
Apr-08	1034	16	82.53	467	7.2	88.8

Source: TNS/Infosys

Base: Digital Homes/ Multichannel
Platform

All data is based on digital homes only - Reach is 15+ consecutive mins

ALL

CHILDREN

CBBC - Target Child launched 11th Feb

2002,

	CBBC	CBBC	CBBC	Boomerang	Boomerang	Boomerang
	AvWkrCh(000)	AvWkrCh%	AvMins(Viewers)	AvWkrCh(000)	AvWkrCh%	AvMins(Viewers)
Mar-02	235	4.1	45.89	510	9	57.29
Apr-02	156	2.7	41.52	556	9.7	61.7
May-02	219	3.8	43.99	581	10.2	58.84
Jun-02	191	3.3	42.09	651	11.3	69.29
Jul-02	316	5.5	50.9	682	11.9	70.4
Aug-02	370	6.4	56.38	803	14	70.41
Sep-02	315	5.5	50.49	767	13.3	66.02
Oct-02	327	5.8	70.77	733	12.9	69.79
Nov-02	404	7.1	64.14	710	12.5	66.3
Dec-02	362	6.3	69.12	804	14	70.89
Jan-03	400	7.6	59.13	853	16.3	71.82
Feb-03	483	9.3	70.03	954	18.3	82.87
Mar-03	410	6.9	60.33	676	11.4	63.82
Apr-03	574	9.7	71.86	867	14.6	63.93
May-03	557	9.4	67.3	805	13.5	61.77
Jun-03	567	9.5	60.74	778	13.1	64.22
Jul-03	650	11	75.67	811	13.8	69.16
Aug-03	739	12.5	86.89	892	15	73.94
Sep-03	750	12.5	63.45	876	14.6	63.33
Oct-03	759	12.6	67.77	960	16	77.42
Nov-03	839	13.8	66.59	1003	16.5	74.7
Dec-03	878	14.2	72.89	923	14.9	74.04
Jan-04	926	15	72.24	921	14.9	67.74
Feb-04	1004	16.1	69.13	970	15.6	77.88
Mar-04	993	15.4	56.89	883	13.7	69.07
Apr-04	1045	16.2	64.95	922	14.3	81.8

Source:
TNS/Infosys
Base: Digital Homes/
Multichannel Platform

Table cont.

Nickelodeon AvWkRch(000)	Nickelodeon AvWkRch%	Nickelodeon AvMins(Viewers)	Cartoon Network AvWkRch(000)	Cartoon Network AvWkRch%	Cartoon Network AvMins(Viewers)
968	17.1	74.19	748	13.2	60.05
1042	18.1	62.18	866	15.1	65.11
927	16.2	59.65	777	13.6	63.05
993	17.3	61.9	635	11.1	61.31
973	17	69.54	784	13.7	59.06
959	16.7	73.9	800	13.9	69.09
1148	19.9	65.08	717	12.4	58.88
1172	20.7	69.14	819	14.4	59.35
975	17.2	67.27	853	15	62.14
942	16.4	65.88	876	15.3	67.23
976	18.7	62.2	785	15	65.02
915	17.6	62.82	759	14.6	68.74
655	11	58.97	581	9.8	63.58
951	16.1	64.96	729	12.3	70.46
895	15	64.98	708	11.9	62.02
816	13.7	56.54	737	12.4	58.8
816	13.9	61.11	756	12.8	64.93
850	14.3	66.74	773	13	68.07
827	13.7	52.49	765	12.7	57.42
913	15.2	62.56	843	14	65.7
900	14.8	61.56	827	13.6	60.59
855	13.8	57.14	756	12.2	66.32
789	12.7	52.26	678	10.9	59.34
812	13	52.87	736	11.8	64.32
820	12.8	51.86	680	10.6	56.42
903	14	58.08	715	11.1	58.77

¹ DGAMetrics, *A Review of the BBC's Children's Digital Channels*, a Report for Nickelodeon, 16th February 2004. Taunton: David Graham Associates

² DOCUMENTS RECEIVED FOR INFORMATION WHICH COULD BE REFERRED TO BY ANY READER WANTING MORE DETAIL:

1. Review of CBeebies against commitments, March 2004
 2. Review of CBBC against commitments, March 2004
 3. Building Public Value: renewing the BBC for digital world, Michael Grade, BBC June 2004
 4. Review of the BBC's royal charter, BBC's response to the DCMS consultation, June 2004
 5. Submission for the Secretary of State's review of the BBC's new digital television services – detailed service submissions, March 2004 – detailed info about CBeebies and CBBC.
 6. Governors' overview of BBC's submission: sent by Alan Yentob to MMD at Cardiff.
 7. Article by Patrick Barwise on threats to PSB, January 2004
 8. Terms of reference (emails) for Review, June 2004
 9. Downloaded from web:
 - BBC Annual report June 2000
 - Greg Dyke mctaggart lecture August 2000
 - public leaflet – new services from the BBC, air your views, response by 17 nov 2000
 - New services BBC public consultation final report, survey by South Bank, Oct 2000
 - letter from Caroline Thomson seeking sec of state's approval, dated 9 jan 2001
 - jan 18th 2001, press release on public's welcome for new plans (BMRB independent researchers
 - Press release Spectrum Strategy Consultants: Feb 1st 2001: new BBC digital channels will not impact on pay TV broadcasts
 - Report itself, Feb 2001
 - BBC annual report launch, future plans, 4 July 2001
 - Letter from Tessa Jowell giving approval, 13 sept 2001.
 - BBC news release, 13th Sept 2001: BBC welcomes approval for 8 new services
- Speech by Tessa Jowell 13 sept 2001 about new channels
Speech by Greg Dyke 24 June 2002 on future of broadcasting
[Bbc news release, mark Thompson, Banff Monday June 12]

Information provided by the BBC:

Qualitative research with parents and children
Mori and BMRB surveys
BARB audience figures for CBBC and CBeebies over time
Info about provision and how it's changed over time
Marketing and promotional material for parents over time
ITC research
David Graham report for Nickelodeon.

³ Palmer, E., (1988), *Television and America's Children: a Crisis of Neglect*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

⁴ DGAMetrics, *A Review of the BBC's Children's Digital Channels*, a Report for Nickelodeon, 16th February, 2004. Taunton: David Graham Associates

⁵ Based on 3-minute consecutive reach

⁶ Davies, M. M. (2001) *Dear BBC: Children, Television Storytelling and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Davies, M. M., O'Malley, K. & Corbett, B. (1997): 'Children and Television Drama: a study with 1300 5-13 year olds in England and Wales' report submitted to and funded by the BBC, London: London College of Printing.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Máire Messenger Davies is Professor of Media Studies and Director of the Centre for Media Research, in the School of Media and Performing Arts at the University of Ulster, Coleraine. A former journalist with a PhD in psychology, she has written widely on the subject of children, young people and the media. Her publications on this topic include: *'Dear BBC': Children, television-storytelling and the public sphere*, published by Cambridge University Press, 2001; *Consenting children? The use of children in non-fiction television programmes*, published by the Broadcasting Standards Commission in 2001; and most recently, 'Innocent victims/active citizens: children and media war coverage' in *Mediactive 3*, published by Lawrence and Wishart in 2004.