Children of the Information Age: Changes and Challenges

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Introduction

The concern about children, their care, and their needs, has grown to such proportions that it is a major topic of interest not only at the dining room table but also in board rooms and on television. In recent months major networks have produced programs on the provision of financial resources to support children and families, on the alarming increase in young adolescent pregnancy (babies having babies), and on family structure and instability as it affects the lives of children.

What is the state of the world for children in the 1980s? Is there a crisis? Has the family changed so drastically that the young are threatened? The success of "The Cosby Show" as a television comedy points to the enduring search for a two parent, loving household. There are major differences, of course, between "Leave It to Beaver" and the Cosby household antics, but the fact that the family theme and audience appeal both have developed among two generations is undeniable. What are the factors that affect the child of today?

It is the purpose of this article to explore three broad areas that provide a context for understanding the provision of information services to children and young people in the 1980s and the development of

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services as we move toward the twenty-first century. The first is youngsters themselves, their physical needs, and intellectual development. The second—family structure—is a significant area for study since it provides the foundation for a child’s development. Changes in working patterns, parenting practices, even size of families has an impact on the lives of the young. And finally, social, economic, and political factors will be examined as they create a climate that fosters or inhibits a healthy environment for children.

A traditional view of childhood suggests an idyllic time, a protected cocoon from which one emerges as a competent, productive citizen. New and intense pressures on the family, however, may rob this traditional picture of some of its safeguards. Adults as well as children are bombarded with an overwhelming amount of information, inescapable and immediate. Social and political systems geared to a different pace cannot always cope. Today’s challenge may be to adapt the system or to change it.

Changing Aspects of Childhood

While children of the 1960s played with hula hoops and Etch-a-Sketch, today’s youngster manipulates GoBots and transformers, Cabbage Patch preemies and Masters of the Universe. There are greater expectations from parents as well as greater pressures. Children are pulled in different directions. On the one hand the child is exhorted to do better at school, on the other hand youngsters are offered unlimited and unmonitored television access. There is alarm at the number of adolescent pregnancies while sexuality is flaunted by purveyors of everything from jeans to soft drinks. The planet is endangered from nuclear bombs and nuclear waste as youngsters parade proudly in camouflage jackets and play “Rambo.”

Such emulation of adults is not new, but the period of life known as childhood has changed dramatically in the past century. At one time childhood ended at the age of seven when speech developed. In all but ruling classes, childhood was a brief period preparatory to apprenticeship. Since the entire family was a production unit, children were often separated from the family to work as part of adult society.1

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there were gradual changes in life-styles and family concerns. Books related to child care were written that included medical advice as well as instruction on manners and morals. By the late nineteenth century, the middle class
showered their new wealth upon their children as objects of consumption. Children were more visible in society and social reformers drew attention to practices that harmed and hindered their growth. Child labor laws regulated the amount of time spent in mills and compulsory education acts demanded attendance at school.

Today’s child in America experiences a prolonged dependence on the family at the same time that that unit is undergoing much stress and change. Young people are not expected to join the work force until their late teen years or following extensive training beyond secondary school. Yet more and more youngsters have part-time jobs; some estimates indicate that adolescents spend more time at work and/or watch television than all classroom hours combined.

Children’s futures are still determined by family status, resources, and child-rearing practices. There has been a shift of emphasis, however, that influences the child in contemporary Western society: (1) the individual, not the family, is becoming the basic unit; (2) women are regarded with more dignity and respect; (3) society recognizes self-awareness in childhood; and (4) greater value is placed on sincerity, loyalty to self, and personal honesty rather than social harmony.

Many aspects of childhood are contradictory. More and more knowledge has been gained about medical care. Much has been done in work with newborns who are at risk because of premature birth or some injury or defect. Advances in neonatology give premature infants weighing between 2.2 and 3.2 pounds as good a chance at survival as a full-term baby had in 1900. It is equally true, however, that the infant mortality rate for nonwhites is double that of whites, and the nonwhite maternal death rate is four times as high as whites.

In a report from the Children’s Defense Fund, some startling comparisons are made between children from black and white families. Black children are twice as likely to die in their first year, suffer a lower birth weight, have mothers who receive no prenatal care, or be born into a teenage or single parent family. These same children are three times as likely to have mothers who die in childbirth, to be murdered before they are nine, or to die of child abuse. As teens they are five times as likely to become pregnant as their nonblack contemporaries, and twelve times as likely to live with a never married parent. These statements point to some significant policy issues that need consideration. The Defense Fund has pointed out that today there is a more clearly stated policy on protecting animals than children.

Some children, on the other hand, are pressured to achieve. Pediatricians report an increase of patients with headaches, stomach aches,
allergic reactions, and what some identify as Type A behavior. This syndrome is characterized by demanding, high strung, and competitive behavior. Even babies are caught in the “need to achieve” trap. Super-babies are taught to read before they can crawl or are pushed to get into the right college before they go to nursery school.

The term “hothousing” has been used to describe efforts to provide a learning environment that speeds up the learning process. Educators point out, however, the value of play and sequential development for all young children. Yale psychologist Edward Zigler condemns hothousing as a yuppie phenomenon “in which parents try to transfer their own hyperambitious goals to children” and contends that early-learning efforts have “no long-term effect on middle-class kids.”

Brazelton summarizes the concern of many:

One reason that the “superbaby syndrome” has caught on readily in this generation is that there is a kind of vacuum in cultural values for young parents. Cognitive performance is easy to measure and demonstrate to your friends. It becomes a way for young parents to feel successful in their parenting.... My own bias is strong. Emotional development is the base for future cognitive success. If a child develops a good sense of himself and of his competence in all areas, he will be ready to acquire cognitive competence later on.... Our society may need a serious reevaluation—we are raising children to be highly individualistic, intellectually clever, and self-motivated—to the exclusion of others around them. Do we want to create cognitive monsters?

Society’s views of childhood throughout history have changed and expanded the length of dependency of the young. Today’s child has more opportunities yet has added pressures to produce and succeed. With all the conflicting theories, advice, and exhortations, young children are the most analyzed group in contemporary society. While some claim that the child’s chief project is being at home in the world, this state of being is not made any easier by “the legions of social scientists who vie for theoretical ascendancy and prescriptive power over parents and teachers. The cult of expertise is now entrenched everywhere—from maternity wards to schools.”

Families at Risk

All children need some kind of support to grow into healthy, functioning adults. The family has traditionally fulfilled this role, but many conditions appear to be threatening this most basic social unit. In many ways the image of the American family has changed drastically.
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The number of children living with both parents, for instance, has shifted and the division between black and white families is even more marked as shown in table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year(s) of Birth</th>
<th>Single Parent Families</th>
<th>Two Parent Families</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black Children</td>
<td>White Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950-54</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>70%</td>
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Urie Bronfenbrenner, noted psychologist, cites significant changes in the American family in the past quarter century. He identified four specific factors affecting these changes: (1) the increase in working mothers; (2) fewer adults in the home; (3) more single-parent families; and (4) more children of unwed mothers. This fragmentation and isolation of the family occurs among younger parents and increasingly among families of all races and strata in society.

In addition to structural changes in the family, the number of children being born is markedly different. In the United States, married couples are having children at a later age and childlessness is rising particularly among college-trained career women. In the past fifteen years the childless rate has doubled. This population rate decrease is not the case worldwide however. Demographic forecasters at the Rockefeller Foundation predict that between 1980 and 2000 the population for the African continent will increase by 75 percent, Latin America by 65 percent, and North America by 17 percent at the most.

Although the fertility rate trends are down, the size of the total U.S. population will not decline in the twentieth century. Births still outnumber deaths, immigrants arrive, and the baby boomers are now having babies themselves. It is estimated that it will take about sixty-five years for the population to stabilize at zero growth even if the current rates continue.

Other factors affect family size and the population growth rate. Experts predict that women who have entered the work force are there to
stay. Inflation means that pressures are rising for many families to have two paychecks to maintain their accustomed standard of living and perhaps improve it a bit. In the past, fertility rates have tended to rise during economic booms and fall during recessions. Today, however, women who can earn higher wages in the labor market will tend to have fewer children keeping the fertility rate low.\footnote{15}

Women have moved into the work force in unprecedented numbers and their roles have changed rapidly. Some experts feel that women have been given little support for their nurturing side; they are proving to the marketplace their independence, competitiveness, and equality. Unfortunately the number of men who feel the need to work in the marketplace and learn to nurture has not grown as much.\footnote{16}

According to Brazelton, today's families are pioneers on the forefront of a revolution. They have few role models to follow. Many working couples with small children have five careers between them: two as nurturers, two as employees, and one as a married couple. The stresses of being "Supermom" and "Superdad" are present. The stereotype of the noninvolved male, the often unspoken social bias of the mother who leaves her baby when it is not absolutely necessary, and the stigma of homemaking as rewarding work still exist. All of these are issues of the day, yet by 1990 it is predicted that 75 percent of children will have both parents working outside of the home.\footnote{17}

Working mothers do not spend as many hours at home tasks as women who stay at home. Unfortunately, even when both parents work, the domestic tasks frequently are not shared equally. Although this imbalance is improving, it still means added responsibility for the mother. In 1950, 30 percent of the work force was comprised of women; in 1979 it had grown to 42 percent with 75 percent of divorced, separated, and widowed women holding jobs. Of women with spouses and children under 18 (including mothers with preschool children), 58 percent now work. The rate for working mothers has risen faster than any other segment in the work force and continues to increase.\footnote{18}

There are many implications for family life with so many women employed. In the United States 55 percent of children have working mothers. Research shows that with a higher percentage of educated women, there are economic benefits to both the employer and employee. With rising inflation rates and in families of lower income levels, women need to work or believe they do to have a margin for security.\footnote{19} With two parents working, children are more likely to be cared for by someone outside the family or to be unsupervised after school.
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Although many families find it necessary to have two paychecks to survive, more and more children are being raised by only one of their parents. At one time, under English Common Law, the father was given absolute rights over both wife and children. U.S. courts now ordinarily award children to the mother in custody disputes. There are, however, a growing number of exceptions to this arrangement as some children are raised by their fathers or parents are awarded joint custody. It is a fact, however, that since 1970 the number of female-headed families has increased by 97 percent.\(^20\)

One of the most detrimental aspects for the single parent mother is the deterioration of her economic position. Many have difficulty reentering the job market while others work jobs with inadequate wages to support a family. About one in three female-headed families lives in poverty as compared to one in eighteen households with two parents.\(^21\)

In 1984, of the 7.3 million families living below the poverty line, 3.8 million were single parent families, and 3.5 million of these were families headed by a female. The poverty level for a family of four in 1964 was $3000 and in 1984 it was $10,609. If a person were paid at the current minimum wage of $3.35 an hour, she would make $6,968 a year. Although equal pay is a concept accepted by many, the feminization of poverty is a fact. Estimates in 1984 have shown that women earn 64 percent less than men.\(^22\) In that same year more that 75 percent of all poor were either adult women or children under 18. More than one in five young people live below the poverty line, and these figures more than double for minorities. The United States has become the first society in history in which persons are more likely to be poor if they are young rather than old. Children have displaced the elderly as the poorest age group. Although less than 27 percent of the total population, children comprise 40 percent of the poor.\(^23\)

These figures do not show the number of unmarried women of all ages having children. Births to single women increased by more than 90 percent between 1970 and 1980.\(^24\) Many of these single women are teenagers. One report indicates the rate of teen pregnancy for youngsters between 15 and 19 is 96 per 1000. The United States is the only developed nation reporting increased birth rates in this age group.\(^25\) Children born to teenagers often have lower birth weight and health problems related to diet and prenatal care.

Despite the many pressures—such as the burden of two jobs and the struggle for economic survival—the single parent is much more visible today. Many feel that single parenthood has its rewards. Primarily, there is relief from marital conflict, an increase in self esteem from the ability
to manage work and family life, and a feeling of independence. Many enjoy a closer relationship with their children. For some families, however, the only means of income is subsidy such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children and food stamps.26

Family mobility also affects American children. In the United States a child moves twice as often as his or her European counterpart. About one-fifth of American families move annually, and they are more often families with young children.27 A Harris survey of 1500 family members found a 65 percent agreement rate with the expectation that to get ahead on the job one must be willing to move.28 The nuclear unit of parent and child often finds itself far from relatives or long-time friends. Since World War II the number of families moving has soared. Friendships are hard to find, as is a sense of community. Packard suggests that a correlation exists between an area's mobility rate and its divorce rate.

Another major factor affecting family stability is the rate of divorce in the United States. The number of children affected by divorce has more than tripled in the last thirty years.29 The risk of living in a broken home by age 16 has remained relatively stable in this century because of the balance between parental death in the early 1900s and the increasing rate of homes broken by divorce or separation in the last twenty years.30 Figures now show that nearly one out of every three marriages in the United States ends in divorce. Estimates project that four out of every ten children born in the decade between 1970 and 1980 will spend part of their childhood in a one-parent family.31 Any breakup of the family unit causes problems and pain for those concerned, especially children. Divorce is second only to death of a spouse or parent in creating stress.32

With more single parents, working mothers, and divorced families, children are being separated from parents at an earlier age. Child care experts are unsure and often disagree about the effects of early separation, especially about the length of time involved in the attachment and bonding process. Some feel it can be as short as three or four months. For others the necessary time period is as long as two or three years for children to feel secure in the family unit and to develop the foundation for learning and loving.

Such diversity of opinion is indicative of child-care theory in general. Since World War II the boom in the number of experts and theories of how to raise a better child has produced volumes of research and advice but no agreement on the description of the ideal child. Some experts have stressed using scientific techniques in child rearing while others advocate doing things the instinctive natural way. Some advisers have insisted that discipline is necessary for a child to understand the
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limits of acceptable behavior. Other experts claim that loving negotiation is more effective in promoting prosocial behavior. While the cognitive development of the child was considered the most significant aspect of the maturation process by some, other researchers have been preoccupied with emotional development. Martha Wolfenstein’s analysis of baby care literature from the years between 1920 and 1950 observed the shift from considering the baby as a “depraved soul” that needed to be taught to be sociable to a view of the child as a source of enjoyment who is neutral on moral issues. This lack of consensus among experts has led one researcher to label child-care theory as “an indecisive graveyard of brief enthusiasms.”

Two nineteenth-century theorists have had a great influence on child development since World War II. Sigmund Freud emphasized emotional, psychoanalytical, and environmental aspects of childhood and ego structure. His approach led parents to replace worries over disease with the prevention of psychical pathology. The other major figure, Jean Piaget, suggested that development was divided into different periods, each with a definable set of skills to be mastered. Both Piaget and Freud have been followed by other philosophers, educators, and researchers who contradict and confound issues related to the development of the young child. Changes in thirty years have shifted from advocating a strictly timed feeding schedule to feeding on demand; from spanking to talking out confrontations; from breast feeding and natural childbirth to baby bottles and heavy medication. It takes a strong minded parent to heed the advice of Dr. Spock, first given in 1946 in chapter 1 of The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care:

The more people have studied different methods of bringing up children the more they have come to the conclusion that what good mothers and fathers instinctively feel like doing for their babies is the best after all.

Challenges of the Information Age

Many recent studies commissioned by both public and private sector agencies point to the need for bolstering the American family. Economic and social concerns as diverse as corporate personnel policies and health care priorities often directly relate to whether an individual family unit will or will not survive. With so many more women in the work force, for instance, the issue of child care is a factor which has not only on-the-job productivity implications for the employer but also long term health, educational, and fiscal concerns for the employee as well. At present, the United
States has licensed day-care facilities for just a fraction of the young children whose parents work. Many more youngsters are cared for in unregulated situations varying from those supervised by a family member other than one of the parents in the child's own home, to an unrelated adult taking in three or four children on a regular basis. The quality of these programs is often hard to determine, but many have profound impact on young children. One research study indicated that children who attended low quality facilities from infancy, when tested at ages three and four, were more aggressive, impulsive, and egocentric. Other studies have found some veterans of day-care can be less socialized, more physically active, and less cooperative with adults.35

For lower income families there are other problems as well. The Children's Defense Fund reports that in 1982, 57 percent of three and four year olds in families of medium to high incomes attended some preschool program while only 28 percent of those children in lower income families attended.36 Other industrialized countries have developed provisions for day-care, but in the United States, few employers seriously consider assistance with child-care facilities. Reformers suggest not only paid leave for both parents, but disability leaves for illness and family crises as well as flexible work plans for parents.37

Many conditions of contemporary life lead to additional stress on already over-burdened families. Causal relationships are difficult to determine, but it is a fact that child abuse is increasing in the United States. Reported figures in 1976 showed approximately ten cases of abuse or neglect per 1000 children. By 1984, 1,727,000 cases were reported or approximately 27 cases per 1000 children. The figures represent an increase of 158 percent in just eight years and, it must be noted, account only for reported cases of neglect and abuse.58

Two principle sources for data about abuse are hospital and community agency reports and research surveys. Many question whether the numbers show an actual increase in cases of abuse or changes in reporting practices. Most researchers have concluded that the instance of abuse to children is underestimated, however, and that reported figures are low. Many parents do not take the child for medical treatment or change hospitals and doctors to avoid suspicion. Many injuries go undetected or physicians fail to report them to a central agency. While lower income, poorly educated persons may seem to be more abusive, middle and upper class parents, having more privacy in living conditions, can be more deceptive and hide abusive behavior to children by going to private physicians.
Stress is often related to abusive behavior. Researchers have identified nearly 44 percent of abusive behavior cases related to health problems, 47 percent to economic or living conditions, and, overlapping both categories, nearly 71 percent of cases related to family interaction. Parke and Collmer analyzed findings in child abuse research to determine some common elements. They found that most abusive adults had aggressive, physical punishment in their own childhood. Violence is often reflected in family interactions where physical punishment is a widely used disciplinary technique. Unemployment is also a factor in child abuse and other family violence. Because the parent is home more, and has a loss of status and income, feelings of hostility are often directed toward children. Abusers tend to be isolated and very mobile. They also tend to prevent their children from developing relationships with others. The abusers often were abused themselves and probably learned the pattern through imitation. Abusive parents are often inconsistent in employing discipline and attempt to justify, minimize, or shift the blame for their violent actions.

Although more is known about general causes of abusive behavior, not much has been done about prevention. The most pressing needs appear to be how to identify and assess all aspects of the problem. Research needs to be done to determine if patterns exist in abusive families. All classes of persons need to be examined. Programs being conducted now need to be evaluated. As Parke and Collmer state “only through better understanding of the problem will we be better able to protect our children.”

While some parents abuse and neglect their children, other youngsters are self-abusive. Among adolescents, suicide has become the third leading cause of death. The rate of suicide since 1985 in the 15-19 age group has tripled, although it now seems to be leveling off. Various researchers have blamed this incredible increase on everything from the Vietnam War to drugs, television, and stress. Others contend that adolescents have little emotional support because of family mobility, divorce, and loss of family contact time.

Many agencies and organizations are attempting to help families cope with the stress of daily living. Sometimes the system itself shows strain; American public education in particular has been the focus of much recent criticism. Public attention was caught by the report *A Nation at Risk*, but the document was only one of several pointing to deficiencies in teachers, classroom practice, and lack of parental involvement in the educational process. It is not only the availability of public education but also the universal concern about its quality that
represent a major shift in the American conscience. While only about 25 percent of the grandparents of children born in 1955 finished high school, about half of the children's parents did. By 1982 nearly 86 percent of children will receive high school diplomas, and a majority of these will attend college at least for awhile. "The average school child in 1982, unlike that of 50 years ago is likely to receive at least an adequate education—if the youngster remains in class."43

The National Assessment of Educational Progress in recent surveys has registered a decline for reading scores as well as math and science scores. There is a widening gap between different socioeconomic levels, leaving the poor farther and farther behind. Some teachers suggest that today's child lacks motivation, imagination, and interest in learning. On the other hand, educator Ronald Edmond identifies five characteristics which have been effective in producing high levels of learning: (1) teachers who have high expectations of their students; (2) an active leader as principal; (3) emphasis on basic skills; (4) standardized tests to measure skills; and (5) an orderly environment. Such a set of factors places the emphasis on the role of teacher as model and mentor and suggests that the family has greater and greater expectations of institutions outside the nuclear unit of parent and child.44

Within our Anglo-American legal system, children are still regarded as property of the parents or the state if the parents are not present. Parents were given these rights "out of the conviction that children lacked the wisdom to be effective advocates for themselves"; the concept is termed "parens patriae."45 The courts do have the power to control and regulate society's concern relating children to such issues as abuse, placement, custody, adoption, and juvenile offenses. Within the legal system, however, there is an obvious reluctance to intervene between parent and child. The Carnegie Council reported an apparent dichotomy in the present family law between breaking up families and efforts to protect children abandoned by parents who cannot cope. Without skilled advocates and lawyers with special training, children will not have their rights upheld. Children need to be protected when neglected or abused by families; when assigned to institutional care; when declared status offenders (cases in which rebellious children are turned over to the juvenile courts); when disagreements arise between parents about health, schooling, and work; and when in need of protection in schools and from environmental or health hazards.46

The status of children before the law has also changed dramatically. In 1950, 170 persons or .004 percent of the population under fifteen were arrested for serious crime. The laws themselves as well as reporting
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procedures have changed in the last thirty years so that in absolute terms the figures are difficult to comprehend or compare. For instance, between 1950 and 1979 the adult crime rate tripled, but the rate of serious crime committed by children increased 11,000 percent. Less serious crimes committed by children increased 8300 percent. Even in relative terms, however, it is staggering to consider that a city or town in 1950 reporting twenty serious crimes committed by youngsters under fifteen would in 1979 be reporting 2200 such crimes. The link between such statistics and disrupted, at-risk family situations is not hard to make.

The United States is the only industrialized country which does not provide a subsidy to all families with children. A helter-skelter approach to assistance to families pervades programs at all levels. More than twenty federal agencies provide a variety of services to families through nearly 260 different programs, but there is no coordination and little communication among agencies or programs. In 1938, director of the U.S. Children's Bureau, Grace Abbott wrote: "All children are dependent, but only a relatively small number are dependent on the state." The situation remains the same today. Help is provided to families on a federal, state, or local level only when there is trouble, not when that trouble might be prevented.

The issues facing the continued growth and healthy development of American families are complex, and solutions to problems often become problems themselves. Advice from experts differs; research findings are sometimes contradictory; and grandmothers with a cup of tea and a word of comfort or concern are often too far away to help. Many times agencies and institutions in the business of service appear to serve themselves first and clients second. Yet Daniel Patrick Moynihan's proclamation in Family and Nation is echoed by many: "The future of a society may be forecast by how it cares for its young."

Libraries as agencies which work with young people must be aware of factors affecting those they seek to serve. Children's services in public libraries need to be reexamined in the light of needs not only of the children but their families. Renewed efforts with child-care agencies and schools may need to be instituted as families come to shift more responsibility to agencies and institutions outside the nuclear unit.

A program recently developed in Pittsburgh serves as a case in point. In an effort to encourage families to read aloud to young children, a packet of books was distributed to adults bringing babies to the county health department clinics. As the packets, which also contained information about the local public library, were distributed, project personnel talked to adults about the benefits of reading aloud to chil-
Children and suggested a few simple techniques. Many families acknowledged that they rarely read to their children, but most seemed willing to try the books. Over the months that followed, response of both the parents and Health Department staff indicated a real enthusiasm for the project. One nurse commented that on home visits children would often greet her at the door with one of the books, demanding a story or wanting to show off some special interest. Parents told her that bedtime was easier with a book. Here is the verbatim transcription of the young mother of Donta (twenty-one months):

> Sometimes Donta will wake up in the morning and the first thing he does is grab a book. He can sit for at least half hour without moving and he seems careful as he turn pages and most of the time he never misuse them. When he does he get upset and shows me.

The transcription does not even begin to convey the enthusiasm and pride of this young woman as she talked with the project staff.

In a follow-up study, six months after the initial contact, the majority of the participants were continuing to read to their children. Very few, however, had any contact with the public library. Many claimed to be buying their own books. Some were probably rereading the original gift books, but there was little interest expressed in the resources of the public library.

These parents were often not working or their children were cared for by nearby family members. The interest in their children's welfare was evident, yet these parents do not see the public library as part of that process. The possibilities for public library service to these families are enormous and challenge the traditional strengths of children's services. Librarians are masters of knowing stories that move listeners and readers, that promote inquiry, that allow a chance to step back and view ourselves and others in a new light. Public libraries all over the country have the opportunity to break the cycle of illiteracy and to intervene in the educational process.

There is growing evidence that families and children face a multiplicity of problems as we end one century and move into another. Parents want the best for their children but sometimes create tensions and stress in that search. The system of education, judicial structure, social agencies and institutions may be geared to a different pattern of family life. The mission of the public library to provide access to the world's civilization is still a viable and laudable goal; the means to that end needs considerable review. As Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Bernard Lawn said, "The world was not left to us by our parents, but lent to us by our children."
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