Children's Reading Habits and Their Use of the Media: How much do they read? What do they prefer to read? How do they read?

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Stories are told in all cultures. And this has been so from the first time humans sought contact with each other. Stories have been a means of creating solidarity and a common context. There are a great variety of genres and forms of expression: myths, fairy tales, and fables. Common to all cultures also is the move from the oral to the written narrative and then later to the modern visual narrative in films, TV, video, and the computer.

Children and Reading

What I am concerned with in this lecture is children's and young people's relationship with the written narrative, in other words, literature as we know it from the medium of books. But I would also like to take a quick look at children's and young people's use of other media in the very closely interconnected modern world of media.

For many years, especially in the western world, we have increasingly observed doubts emerging about the printed text. Will the book survive as a medium? And will children continue to read books? Is it not a fact that both children and young people, and for that matter also adults, spend most of their free time sitting in front of a TV or a computer screen? Will people all over the world go straight from an oral to a digital culture and, so to speak, skip over writing and the book culture?

This doubt is, in fact, nothing new. At the end of the nineteenth century, when films and cartoons were emerging, there were those who that said that the book, and literature with it, were about to die. It didn't happen. Other media arrived in the twentieth century, to be precise, the electronic media: radio, TV, and then much later video, and then finally the computer with CD-ROM and Internet facility. Every single time we heard the old claims repeated: books will not be able to compete and survive.

But, in fact, books have competed and survived everywhere in the western world. The medium of the book has, so to speak, found its place in the collective array of media, for books have shown themselves to be an excellent technology among other technologies. In reality, books today are in many ways stronger than ever before. If we look at surveys of children's and young people's reading and media habits in the western world carried out in the last fifty years, the years when the big developments in the media have taken place, one can get a generally clear picture, and despite the variations from country to country, there are also some common traits. Children do not read quite so much as they did thirty to fifty years ago. There are about as many children reading, but altogether they do not read as much as before. Among children and young people the

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many new electronic and digital media have, to an increasing degree, out-competed some printed media other than the book: the reading of cartoons has notably fallen.

There is a great deal of difference in how people react to this actual, if not overwhelmingly large, decline in children's and young people's leisure reading. Some see even a minor fall as not much short of a catastrophe, while others prefer to see the fact that the decline in reading, despite a completely new world of media, is not greater than it is. Some view the development as doomed and gesticulate in a defeatist way, while others see opportunities to maintain and perhaps even increase the level of reading and launch reading campaigns within schools and libraries and in the outside world.

Even if the figures for children's and young people's leisure reading are not particularly high in western European countries, it seems that the pessimism is greater in countries such as England and France, while the Scandinavian countries are rather more optimistic. An explanation for this could be that the library system in Scandinavian countries is more attuned to children and young people and that children's and young people's literature, also modern writing, has an important role to play in schools' teaching the mother tongue. Thus in these countries there already exist to a great degree the tools that are necessary to maintain or change developments. Common to Denmark, Norway, and Sweden is the fact that they regularly organise large campaigns and festivals for books for children and young people, and that individual schools make specific efforts.

A cautious preliminary conclusion could be that countries with a well-developed infrastructure for the book culture are better placed than other countries to maintain levels of reading. An essential element in such infrastructures is the children's library and the school library. Certainly school libraries should be mentioned in those countries where every school has its own library. And that is the case in Denmark, for example.

Children's Books in Denmark

There are just over five million people living in Denmark, of whom roughly one million are children and young adults up to the age of 15. It is this age group that primarily reads children's and young people's books or has them read to them. All Danish local districts have children's libraries, and all Danish schools have school libraries. Every year approximately 2,000 children's books are published, of which 1,600 are fiction. Of these, 40% are written in Danish and 60% are translations, particularly from English and American English. Of these books, children's and school libraries buy about 1.7 million copies a year. In all, there are 34 million books accessed in children's and school libraries. And children do borrow them. There are about 60 million loans a year, which corresponds to roughly 60 books per child per year.

The Survey

I am going to tell you about a large survey that was carried out in Denmark in January, 2000. The Centre for Children's Literature, of which I am the Director, was responsible for this survey. The survey, with a summary in English, can be found in the Danish book, *Børn læser bøger [Children Read Books],* published this year by Roskilde Universitetsforlag. The Danish market and the Danish infrastructure for children's books, described above, has some significance when one has to understand and interpret the results of the survey. At the same time I should, however, stress that most of the survey's findings also appear to have validity for other countries and cultures where there is a reasonably large production of children's books.

Participating in the survey were 901 children in the 9-to-12 year-old age range with a more or less equal division of boys and girls. Since there were similar surveys carried out with the same age range and the same questions in Denmark in 1978 and 1993, there is a basis for comparisons over time and it is possible to see some lines of development.

Four questions were of particular interest in this survey:

1. How often do 9-to-12 year-olds, grouped by age and gender, read books in their free time? I should emphasise that here we are talking about children reading voluntarily in their free time, not homework. That means that most of the children who say that they seldom or never read in their free time do read at school to some degree.

2. How well do children read in their own judgment, and is there a connection between reading ability and the amount children read?

3. How much were 9-to-12 year-olds read to at home before they came to school, and is there was a connection between being read to at home as a child and then reading independently later in life?

4. Finally, what books had children read the previous month, and what did they consider to be the best books they had ever read or had ever had read to them? We have thus been able to compile a children's top twenty list of the world's best children's books from a Danish child's point of view. I can tell you that there are many authors represented in this list, not only Danish ones. I will return to this later.

How Often Do Danish Children Read?

The answers to the first question, how often do you read books in your free time, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
How Often Do You Read Books in Your Free Time?

	Seldom	Regularly	Often
All	25%	20%	56%
Boys	32%	21%	47%
Girls	18%	19%	63%
9 years	22%	14%	65%
12 years	31%	25%	45%

As you can see, 56% of the children read books often, that is, at least several times a week, and most of these read almost every day. At the other end, there are the 25% of children who seldom or never read (only 2% say that they never read books). And then there is the 20% in the middle who say they read regularly, that is, several times a month.

One can always discuss whether this is a good result. Many will certainly find it unsatisfactory that 25% seldom or never read. As far as this figure is concerned, one can only say that it has in fact fallen since 1993 and that there has always been in Denmark, as long as we have been doing this kind of survey, 25-30% of children and adults who do not read books in their free-time. Moreover, we also see the same percentage of those who seldom or never read in other countries where similar surveys have been carried out.

The survey revealed a difference between the extent to which girls and boys read. While the average for those who read often is 56%, the figure for boys is 47% and for girls it is 63%. This tendency was noted in earlier surveys and in surveys undertaken in other countries, including England and France. I will return later to give a more detailed description of the difference between boys' and girls' use of media. There are indeed very marked differences.

The development since 1993 is clear in the following overview in Table 2:

Table 2
How Often Do You Read Books in Your Free Time (1993 and 2000)?

	Seldom		Regularly		Often	
	1993	2000	1993	2000	1993	2000
All	**29%**	**25%**	**15%**	**20%**	**55%**	**56%**
Boys	**38%**	**32%**	**16%**	**21%**	**46%**	**47%**
Girls	**22%**	**18%**	**15%**	**19%**	**64%**	**63%**

From this you can see that the figures for 9-to-12 year-olds who read often are almost the same in 1993 and 2000. So there has not been much change in the last seven years despite the marked development of the media in Denmark, including several new TV channels, Danish TV channels, and above all the computer, which has arrived in earnest and has indeed made very great inroads. Roughly 80% of all Danish schoolchildren have a computer at home and increasingly in their own bedrooms.

It is, however, most interesting that the number of children, both girls and boys, who seldom or never read has fallen. Especially boys. In 1993 the percentage of boys who seldom or never read was 38%. In January 2000 the figure was only 32%. There has also been a decline in the figure for girls, but it is smaller. Conversely, the number of children who read regularly has risen since 1993.

If we go back to a similar survey from 1978, however, there were more 9-to-12 year-olds who read books often, at least several times a week. To be precise 64% read often in 1978 compared to 56% now, while the percentage of children who seldom or never read was the same. Here we see the same pattern that exists in other countries: there are still just as many readers, but the number of young people who read a great deal has fallen slightly. The pressure from other media has been too strong, despite everything.

It is worthy of note, however, that there has not been a further decline throughout the 1990s until now. On the contrary, more children are reading regularly and we seem to have got boys better in tow. The reason for this may be that there was a greater focus on children's reading abilities and reading habits in Denmark, particularly in the 1990s. A special effort was made in schools, and to a certain degree also outside schools, to improve children's reading; there was also a series of festivals focusing on children's reading.

An Early Dip. Returning to Table 1, may I ask you to focus your attention on the number of books that 9-to-12 year-olds read. A total of 65% of the nine year-olds read often, while only 45% of the twelve year-olds do. The figures for 10 and 11 year-olds are 59% and 54%. In other words, children have hardly learnt to read when the amount of reading they do declines. The decline starts at ten years of age. In Denmark this has led to a debate about whether we should teach children to read at an earlier age. I should point out that in Denmark we have a tradition of teaching children to read relatively late and of advancing relatively slowly, something that to some degree seems to be changing these days.

How Well Do They Read?

When we asked the 901 children in the survey how good they were at reading, they were very realistic in their judgments compared with new surveys of children's reading skills. We can, therefore, happily go on to ask whether there is a connection between how well one reads (or how well one thinks one reads) and how much one reads. The answer, unsurprisingly, is yes. Among those children who seldom or never read there are more bad readers than among those children who often read. And that is true for both boys and girls. It is noticeable, however, that 40% of the 9-to-12 year-olds who seldom read do, in fact, read well. So, these children (about 10%) have the reading skills but do not use them or seldom use them to read books in their free time. I should stress again that these children read both at school and when they prepare for school, in other words, when they do their homework.

Reading Aloud

Most children say that they had stories read aloud to them at home before they went to school, primarily by parents but also by grandparents and siblings. Of these, 66% say they were often read to (at least several times a week), 12% say that they were regularly read to but not often, while 22% say they were seldom or never read to. There is no big difference between boys and girls.

One question that is often asked in the debate about children's reading is whether someone reading aloud to children while they are small means that they will read more when they grow older. The answer the survey gives is clear: the more reading aloud there is at home, the more children read later in life. This is evident from the overview in Table 3:

Table 3
Reading Habits and Reading Aloud in the Home

Girls		Reading Aloud at Home		
		Often	Regularly	Seldom
READING HABITS	Often	**74%**	**9%**	**17%**
	Regularly	**65%**	**16%**	**20%**
	Seldom	**61%**	**8%**	**30%**

Although Table 3 gives data about girls, there are not such big differences between girls and boys in this particular respect. Of the girls who often read, 74% were often read to in the home. As for the girls who seldom or never read, the percentage is 61%. Note that 30% here, almost a third of the girls who seldom or never read in their free-time, were not read aloud to in the home before they went to school.

Perhaps some had imagined greater and more marked differences. That this is not the case is due to the fact that most Danish parents read aloud to their children. In addition, many Danish children who go to kindergarten before going to school also have stories read to them there. The figures can also be interpreted in this way: there is no guarantee that children will read a lot when they grow up, even if they have had stories read to them as small children. There is, however, a substantial risk that they will not read books in their free-time if they have not have stories had read aloud to them. The negative effect appears to be greater than the positive effect.

Preliminary Conclusions

We can, therefore, conclude that 9-to12 year-old Danish children read quite a lot of books in their free-time. To be absolutely precise, we are talking about 2.8 books a month: 3.3 books a month for girls and 2.4 books for boys. Over half of the children read at least several times a week and most of them read almost every day. At the other end of the scale, however, there is a group of children, about 25%, who seldom or never read, a percentage that has decreased throughout the twentieth century until now. Put simply, we have more children who read regularly and more boys who read. In addition, other surveys show that children who read typically spend four to six hours a week reading books. We can also conclude that girls read rather more than boys.

While we are on this subject, the very important point should be stressed that all the signs are that teachers, school librarians, children's librarians, and parents can have some influence on children's reading. Children whose parents read to them when they are small seem to read more books when they are older. And the fact that boys read more today is in no small measure thanks to schools' efforts.

How Do Children Read?

Many questions, however, remain unanswered. How do children read? What do they read? And what is the relationship between reading and children's use of other media in their free time? These are issues I want to address in the following section.

In the 1990s, with the aid of questionnaires and personal conversations with 100 children, I examined the circumstances under which children read in their free time. Most children said that they preferred to read on their own in their own room (93% of Danish children in the 9-to-12 age range have their own bedroom). To the question about what time of day they read, the children's answers were:

Table 4
What Time of Day Do Children Read?

	All
In the morning	**17%**
In the afternoon	**72%**
Around mealtimes	**19%**
In the early evening	**52%**
At bedtime	**83%**

As can be seen, the best times for reading for both boys and girls are at bedtime and in the afternoon. This is hardly surprising.

Where does this reading take place? Sitting or lying in bed. By far the most children praise the virtues of reading in bed. But the armchair and the sofa are also mentioned. By contrast, only a few children like to read while sitting on a normal chair, such as the chairs that are typically in schools.

And what else do they need? Most listen to music while they are reading, at least for some of the time, and no fewer than 80% prefer to have something to drink. Many also like to eat something while they are reading; food is fine but sweets are better.

In other words, a scene is set for reading. Children create what one might call a polyaesthetic universe in which many desires are satisfied at once via all the senses: the visual, the auditory, the sense of taste, and the sense of touch. In my personal conversations many children, especially girls, told me, for example, how important it was that the pillow and the duvet were in the right place before they could start reading.

These comforts associated with reading at home, of course, are a long way from what schools can offer. If we, in a desire to imitate leisure reading, were to absorb the full implications in schools, we would have to have bunk beds in classrooms. Every schoolchild would have to have their CD, Walkman, and their music. And the teacher would go round serving drinks and sweets. In some libraries, including school libraries, there has been an attempt to meet these desires by, for example, having soft chairs and sofas. But generally one has to say that it is a risky business for a school to try to compete with leisure reading. It would be better for the school to create its own identity in this area. Reading at school is different from reading at home but just as valuable.

And so, as far as setting the scene for reading is concerned, we can see that recent research gives us knowledge that will inevitably be a challenge to schools and libraries. It is important that this challenge is taken up and that we involve the children in the processes of change that we must set in motion. It is the children who know something about reading: they know when it is most fun and most important.

What Do Children Read?

And so to the next important question about what children read in their free time. Let me say right away, here and now, that there are quite big differences between individual countries with respect to the connection between what is read in school and what is read in leisure time.

In Denmark we have made an increasing effort in recent years to read children's and young people's books in the Danish 'folkskole', a school for children aged between 6 and 16. It is absolutely clear in the latest 'folkeskole' law of 1993 that we have to prioritise children's literature, especially in the first six grades. After that, one can move on from literature for young adults to literature for adults. In the whole process of schooling it is envisaged that pupils will read older literature, including Danish classics of literature for both adults and children. I am aware that in other countries children's literature may well play a more peripheral role in teaching, even at the lower and intermediate grades.

This does not mean that Danish children read exactly the same books at school as they do in their free time. There will, of course, be some crossover. At the same time I would like to insist and stress that school must be the place where children meet some of the books, also children's books, that they would not necessarily choose for their leisure reading. School has to take children's own reading material and their own experience of reading seriously while challenging children with the use of other literature. School has to take responsibility for ensuring variety. I will therefore make a further plea to schools to find their own stance, their own identity, while taking children's leisure reading as a starting point.

Back to children's out-of-school reading and what they read. In the latest survey we followed 901 children's reading habits and asked them to identify which books they had read the previous month and which three books were the best they had ever read or had read to them.

Let us look at what children read in the course of a month. First of all, I have to say that there is a great deal of variety not simply among children as a whole but also with individual children. The most prolific readers are, it seems, voracious. We found both quite short books, especially among the nine year-olds, and longer books such as Rowling's *Harry Potter* books and Pulmann's *Northern Light* books. Children read books written in both Danish and in translation. Popular authors of translated works are R.L. Stine, Phyllis Reynolds Naylor, Laura Ingalls Wilder, and Astrid Lindgren. To some degree Enid Blyton is also popular, even though her popularity fell considerably throughout the 1990s. The popular books come from a variety of genres.

It is noticeable that a large number of the Danish authors whom teachers and librarians consider to be the best are also among the most popular books with children. This is true for, among others, Bjarne Reuter who has been translated into several languages, especially his Buster books. While there was once, from the 1950s well into the 1970s, a big difference between the books children chose to read and those parents wanted them to read, there is today much more unanimity between the generations.

The range of books read by children today is wide, and the same breadth is evident when children identify the best book they have ever read or have had read to them. Let us take a look at the most frequently mentioned books, arranged in order with the most popular at the top:

1. Astrid Lindgren, *The Brothers Lionheart*
2. Dennis Jürgensen, *Love at First Hiccup*
3. R.L. Stine, *Goosebumps* (series)
4. Hans Christian Andersen, *Fairy Tales*
5. Joanne K. Rowling, *Harry Potter* (series)
6. Astrid Lindgren, *Mio, My son*
7. Phyllis R. Naylor, *The Witch Herself* (series)
8. Bjarne Reuter, *7.A*
9. Laura Ingalls Wilder, The *Little House on the Prairie* (series)
10. A.A. Milne, *Winnie the Pooh*
11. Ole Lund Kirkegaard, *Rubber-Tarzan*
12. Astrid Lindgren, *Pippi Long-Stocking* (series)
13. Astrid Lindgren, *The Robber's Daughter*
14. Astrid Lindgren, *Emil of Lønneberg* (series)

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18. Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*
19. Grimm Brothers, *Fairy Tales*
20. Enid Blyton, *The Famous Five*

Note that 13 of the top 20 authors on the list are foreign authors, among them authors of some of the classics of children's and of world literature. First and foremost is Astrid Lindgren who has five titles in total in the list. But there are also Milne, Defoe, the Grimm Brothers, and, of course, Hans Christian Andersen.

The list is a compilation of both boys' and girls' choices, but there are differences between the genders. On the girls' list we find several Danish and some Swedish socially realistic novels. Girls, and this is supported by other surveys, like reading about everyday situations and problems, just as they like reading about recognisable feelings. It is often said that girls read "inside themselves" while boys read "outside themselves."

Boys read more science fiction and more historical novels. In other words, they read forwards and backwards in time. They also read more thrillers, just as they read more classical adventure books such as Jules Verne, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe,* and Pyle's *Robin Hood.* The boys did, in fact, put *Robinson Crusoe* in the top ten; the 12 year-olds put it into fifth place. It is often said that boys are not particularly interested in reading books and that they are not at all interested in their cultural heritage, but it is, in fact, boys who through their reading keep several of the great old classics of children's literature alive.

The previous list was organised by title according to the views of 9-to-12 year-olds. The following list is ordered by preferred author:

1. Astrid Lindgren
2. Dennis Jürgensen
3. Bjarne Reuter
4. Ole Lund Kirkegaard
5. R.L. Stine
6. Hans Christian Andersen

7. Joanne K. Rowling
8. Phyllis R. Naylor
9. Lars-Henrik Olsen
10. Laura Ingalls Wilder

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13. A.A. Milne
14. Jules Verne
19. Enid Blyton

In the omitted places (11, 12, 15, etc.) there are a number of Danish socially realistic authors whom the girls have included on the list, in the same way that the boys include many titles by Jules Verne. The reason for Defoe's absence from the list is that he is represented by only one title whereas Lindgren and Reuter, for example, are represented by more than ten different titles. Again it is worth noting that there are many foreign authors on the list and that one would certainly find these authors on lists made in other countries. Children from many countries, perhaps not all countries but in any case many countries, have a common cultural base from the point of view of their favourite books. They can meet and delight together in the fact that all of them, or at least a good number of them, have read Lindgren, Milne, and Wilder, and the boys can add Daniel Defoe and Jules Verne.

Other Media

Many of the most read children's books can be found adapted in other media such as films, cartoons, TV series, computer games, musicals, and even opera. We live in a world with a high degree of intertextuality, and that is also true for the children's world. Generally, indeed, we live in a world characterised by great variety in the realm of media. And once again this is also true for children. Indeed, many children are much more sophisticated users of modern media technology than their parents or teachers, especially since many children have access to these media at home and even in their own bedroom. Again I should emphasise that there are great differences from country to country and from cultural community to cultural community. What I am talking about here today is Denmark, which I suppose may be considered in the same light as many other European countries.

In 1998 a group of Danish sociologists undertook a large study of the leisure habits of 7-to-15 year-olds. In connection with this, they also examined children's and young people's use of media, among other things, whether they had these media at home and in their own bedroom. Knowledge of this can give us a sense of children's and young people's competence at dealing with media technology. Let us look at this overview in Table 5:

Table 5
Media in the Home

	7-to-15 years		13-15 years	
	Home	Own room	Own room	
TV	100%	49%	71%	
Video	92%	18%	38%	
Computer	82%	18%	29%	45% 11%

You can see that there are various media technologies such as TVs, videos, and computers in most of the homes where there are 7-to-15 year-old children. The spread of the computer should be particularly noted. There may be countries where even more homes have computers, just as there are countries where there are, broadly speaking, no computers. But there is one thing we can be sure of both in Denmark and elsewhere and that is that the number will increase. The same development will occur in the majority of countries but perhaps on a different time scale.

Technology has also spread to children's own rooms. Almost half of Danish children have a TV in their own room, and about a fifth have a video as well as a computer. And for the older children in the 13-to-15 year-old age range, no fewer than 71% have a TV in their bedroom, while the percentage for the video is 38% and the computer 29%. The figures rise further for the 16-to-19 year-old age range. And the figures are rising year by year for all age groups. In the two years since the study was undertaken, the number of computers in children's bedrooms has reached close to 25%. At the same time there are more and more homes connected to the Internet, and children are also online in their own rooms.

Among the 13-to-15 year-olds, an average of 29% have a computer in their own room, but this figure disguises a great gender difference: 45% of boys have a computer in their own room, while only 11% of the girls do. Since girls dominate the statistics for reading books, as we saw earlier, there are indications that in a country such as Denmark there is a growing gender difference in which boys largely represent a modern digital media technology while girls to a greater degree represent an old technology.

We will have to get used to the fact that there will be more and more children in the modern information- and knowledge- orientated society who can master the new information and entertainment technologies. But while they increase their daily use of these media, they also hold on to the old technologies because they offer alternative and individual means of acquiring knowledge, experience, and insights. But we should also see this world in front of us as largely divided by gender.

Discussion

Children's Lives

Several questions about the impact of new media on children present themselves. Aren't we about to alter the conditions of children's lives totally, not least the chance for them to organise their own lives? And aren't we moving towards a reality that will inevitably redefine the role of schools, libraries, and school libraries, too? Certainly. Both daily life, with its direct experience, and school, with its structuring of experience and knowledge, have long lost their monopoly of providing information to children as a basis for creating insight. The culture of writing is still in the best of health, but it has new forms connected with the new media and technologies. The culture of the book, in other words the book as a medium, however, has lost its dominant role. The book is and will continue to be merely one medium among many. And it can hardly be called the dominant medium anymore. Although the great novels at the end of the nineteenth century and far into the twentieth century provoked important social debates and contributed greatly to changing society, this role has long since been taken over by television and the Internet is now becoming more and more influential in this area.

Has childhood simply vanished, as many purport? Have we simply stolen childhood from children, so that they no longer experience a child's life, learning from their own experience, but by contrast live in a world of second-hand experiences such as those delivered via TV, video, and the computer?

The answer has to be "no." Their childhood has neither vanished nor, for that matter, been stolen. It is just another world. Some may think that it has become a worse or poorer childhood and think back to earlier times when children played unsupervised games in the woods, by the water, in the fields, in the mountains, and in the towns away from the control of their parents, school, and other institutions.

It is certainly true that most children in the western world today do not enjoy that kind of childhood to the same degree as earlier. In our nostalgia for the past, we often forget, however, that that freer childhood existed in reality only during a very small part of the history of the western world. The great majority of Danish children, for example, did not have an especially free childhood until the beginning of the twentieth century for the sole reason that they worked either on the land, on their parents' farms, or in urban industries where the little money they could earn was a simple necessity for their family to survive.

The particular kind of leisure that the upper classes, and especially their children, had always been able to enjoy prior to 1900 was shared to a certain degree by all children for a period during the twentieth century, except that, of course, they had to go to school. In Denmark this period was from roughly 1920 until the 1970s. Two factors began to change children's lives situations and lives at this point. One was the new electronic and digital media that came to play a more and more important role in their lives, and another was that more and more children began to go to kindergarten because both parents worked in a society that needed their labour.

Children's lives, as a result, have in many ways become more institutionalised and thereby more structured and monitored. Incidentally, in Denmark there are now kindergartens with video cameras set up in such a way that parents can follow their children on the Internet. One could call this control disguised as care. If we look at children's media and leisure habits, we can, in Denmark, divide 9-to-12 year-olds up into various media profiles.

Timetable Children. This group, comprising 50% of the total, make considerable use of a wide range of media. While they watch some TV and video, they also make some use of other media. It is they, for example, who read most books. It is also typical for them to spend a lot of time doing planned leisure activities such as sports and music. These children have to manage so many activities that they need to have a calendar to organise what they do after school: there is football some days at 3 pm; on other days there are music, riding, or whatever at 4pm. And then there are the TV series they are following in addition to the videos they have planned to see one afternoon or evening together with some of their friends. They also use other media including the computer.

Media Children. These children, who make up 35% of the total, are also planned to a large degree, but their lives are not as structured as those of timetable children. It is characteristic of these children that they use predominantly one medium, such as the TV or video and then for several hours a day, or they sit at the computer. Bookworms make up a smaller group and read almost only books.

Play Children. These children, who make up 10-15% of the total, live a sort of life that is in many ways reminiscent of the life children experienced in the middle of the twentieth century, a less structured life in which play is central. This does not mean that timetable and media children do not play; they just do it far less than these play children. Play children are frequently free of the control of their parents and institutions. Some of these children, because of their experiences and habits, find it difficult to conform to institutional and especially schools norms that require, within reasonable limits, children to sit still on a chair and concentrate for longer periods on something that they themselves did not choose to work with.

Work Children. These make up just a small percentage, 0-5%, of the total in several Western European countries, not least the Scandinavian countries. These are children whose lives can recall the working lives of the majority of children before 1900. Today they typically contribute to a family's income, usually in agriculture. This small group of children is brought up knowing that they will take over their parents' property or work when they get older. We can meet these children not only on the land but also in the towns living with refugees from other cultures in which it was far more usual for children to help their parents with their work. Typically these are immigrants who have a small business of a type that had otherwise disappeared from the city scene.

Whereas play children, and to some extent work children, generally do not fit well into modern institutions for children and young adults, the timetable child, by contrast, is extremely well suited to school. They are used to concentrating on a great range of areas for shorter, limited periods. Their lives are, in reality, often more subject to timetabling than many modern schools.

That is why there is nothing one can say to schools and societies trying, via legislation among other things, to support this timetable for the modern child's life. It is, in a broader sense, these children that business also needs because they are flexible and have had varied experience with modern society's technologies. They are also often easier to control.

The Book in the Society of the Future

It is in this changing society, in more and more parts of the world, that the book has to find its place. And in fact it seems to have already found it. This is shown not only

by the Danish Centre for Children's Literature's survey of children's reading habits but also by other studies of general media habits.

This is, however, not the same as saying that the medium of the book will forever stay the same as it is today. There enormous technological changes going on not only outside the world of the book but also in book technology itself. I will point out some characteristic features.

First of all, we have seen for several years now examples of books being linked with other media products such as TV programmes, videos, and CD-ROMs. This is part of an overall packaging policy. The book is thus part of a greater media package.

Secondly, we have seen, also over several years now, a great many examples of the shape and presentation of the modern book differing from that of the traditional book, especially in the area of children's books. Some of these techniques with books are in fact very old. This is true for pop-up books, shaped books, and books with holes in which objects of various kinds are placed. Other examples are books equipped with a keyboard and a little speaker, or books supplied with a battery to light a bulb. There are many creative ideas.

Thirdly, and this has a great deal more fundamental significance for the development of the medium of the book, we are moving towards a technology called "print on demand." The principle is simple: the book is printed only when it is ordered via a bookshop or the Internet. The book is written and perhaps illustrated, but one waits for it to be produced. That means that publishing companies do not have to store books, which in turn means big savings. The technology also allows for the possibility that the same work can be printed with, among other things, different typography such as large type for the weak-sighted. One may also be able to order a different type of binding such as either the normal binding or a special present binding with the recipient's signature. There are a great many possibilities.

Fourthly, and this too has great fundamental significance, there is the development of the so-called e-book, the electronic book. With this technology, one needs, in fact, only to have one book on the shelf, or to be more precise a type of "book-receiver" in the form of a little computer that may appear in the shape of a book with a cover. In this "book" there is room for a floppy disk or a little CD-ROM that can hold one or several literary works; or, more likely, one can download the text from Internet, against payment. The method of reading will be getting the desired text on to the screen that is shaped like the page of a book, probably with a paper-like surface to please the many inveterate book lovers. One reads the first page and then continues by clicking the mouse. Of course, one can choose the typography and size oneself and whether one wants illustrations with the illustrated books. If the work appears in several different illustrated forms, as is the case with *Alice in Wonderland*, one can choose the illustrator. In addition, technology makes it possible for a completely independent type of art where the authors, illustrators, animators, musicians, and others create new works especially for this medium. For it will certainly be possible to combine the classic book with both film and music.

These are merely examples of new technologies that we already have or are well on the way. Some may lament this development, imagining that the good old book will disappear. For my own part I am sure that the good old book will not disappear. It will always have its fascination. And it will certainly be able to co-exist alongside the completely new medium, the electronic book, just as the book has existed alongside several other media for more than a hundred years.

So the book will survive, but in more forms than we are used to, among them the forms that I have spoken about today. There will always be something new. I believe we will enjoy this variety of media for the sole reason that perhaps it is exactly our need for variety that will ensure that the book survives.

In reality, however, the most important thing for the survival of the book as a medium and the survival of literature as an art form is our children's desire to read a good book and good literature. And they have that desire. Also required for its survival is the desire of the mediators of literature, the teachers and the librarians, to pass on literature to others. And they have that desire, too.

Children's understanding of literature, its qualities and its significance, is certainly as great as their love of reading. This is shown by a study undertaken by the Centre for Children's Literature in which a large group of children were interviewed about their attitudes to books.

The children also know what is going on. They know, for example, that there is a difference between boys' and girls' reading habits. They also know the essence of that difference. As one boy said to me: "Girls read more than boys, about love, among other things, because they mature more quickly... that's what they say themselves".

Children know what is good about books. One girl said, "The good thing about books is that they don't make any noise," and another girl said, "There are some people who have never read one single book ...poor them."