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Berson, Ilene R. & Berson, Michael J. (Eds.) (2010) *High-Tech Tots: Childhood in a Digital World*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

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Today's young children are immersed in a world of technology. As a computer engineer and mother of two toddlers I often wonder how much and what technology is developmentally appropriate for young children. It has been eleven years since I obtained a technology degree, and I have seen technology come and go. I have seen how technology hinders people skills and as a result stagnates their professional careers. Technology can be mesmerizing, but it can be addictive and costly. I have developed a mistrustful eye for hot technology and developed a functional rationale for acquiring it. I am a firm believer and promoter of technology for the great service it affords to humanity, yet I am skeptical of the sedentary, unrealistic, restrictive environment it creates. For this reason, I decided to purchase the book *High-Tech Tots: Childhood in a Digital World*, in an effort to enter

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the scholarly discourse on what technology is developmentally appropriate for young children and find some appropriate advice on introducing young children to technology.

High-Tech Tots: Childhood in a Digital World is an edited book composed of twelve chapters, divided into four main categories, introduction, information and communication technology (ICT) as a teaching and learning tool, research on cybercitizenship education, and research on inappropriate digital technology for children. The introduction section is composed of the first three chapters. In the first chapter, the book editors, Berson & Berson, provide an overview of the topics covered in the book. The second chapter explores various definitions of play, as a child's most important work, as a learning vehicle and as synonymous with creativity, which is used through the rest of the book. This link of play with creativity is the spring board argument for most of the positive affordances technology offers children. The rationale is that technology builds on children's vivid imagination and allows them to explore the world in ways they were not previously possible. In the third chapter, Wang, Berson, Jaruszewicz, Hartle & Rosen, provide an overview of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory and discuss the possibility of employing it as a framework to understand children's experience in a today's technological landscape.

The second section of the book analyzes ICT as a teaching and learning tool. Sadly, only one research project is described in this section. This project is being developed to introduce young children to programming concepts. With the use of a robot and wooden blocks that are used to transfer instructions to the robot, children learn technology is a set of instructions, these instructions have a particular syntax, and they are sequential, among many other programming concepts. This is one of the few chapters that do consider young children as their focus of study.

The third section of the book is composed of chapters five through nine. This section describes various research

studies and projects that explore appropriate education for cybersafety and cybercitizenship. The projects explored are NetSafe and Hectors World whose primary intention is to provide children advice on how to be safe online. Other topics discussed in these chapters are the possible risks children experience while online, who is responsible for protecting them, and the eminent need of educating children to be wise cybercitizens.

The final section of the book, explores the possible positive and negative implications of exposing children to other types of technologies such as cell phones, laptops, and digital toys. These chapters will provide good arguments for those in favor of using technology with a purpose and those who do not see the use of technology as an end of its own.

This book is intended for teachers, parents, and researchers. The reader will appreciate the positive view of the use of technology by children throughout the book. For instance, the use of new technology is viewed as an integral part of becoming multiliterate in the twenty-first century. Technology is seen as providing multimodal experiences that were not previously possible and should not be underestimated. Other readers, with a more critical eye for technology, will appreciate the analysis of Webkinz, a digital toy. In their analysis, Dellinger-Pate & Conforti concluded that the more time children spend with media, the more they are involved in consumer culture. A consumer culture is deemed as a precursor of depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and psychosomatic complaints. Also, Chalfen, in his studies on cell phone use by children mentions the possible benefits as well as the drawbacks.

The book could have benefited greatly from a definition of what age range is considered young children. When I saw that the focus of the book was young children, and the title of the book used the term tots, I thought the book would focus on children from three to six years of age. Yet I saw very little focus on this age range throughout the book; most of the content of the book demonstrated studies, or technologies appropriate for children eight

years or older. For example, the use of online communities, which require the child to read, ability not present in most toddlers, the use of cell phones or laptops, which require of the child some sense of responsibility to transport not present in most six year old children, and again, teaching cyber safety techniques of reading emails, when they cannot read. I advise the reader to consider this when purchasing the book.

Overall the book is well organized and the terms used to refer to technology and play are consistent throughout the whole book. I would recommend this book to teachers and parents who are looking for a scholarly introduction to the topic.

About the Reviewer

Maria Eugenia Perez-Butron is a doctoral student in the Department of Education at the University of Texas, Brownsville. She is currently a research assistant at the university.

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