

**emlr**

European media literacy  
on-line review



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### **editorial**

Dear readers,

#### **welcome back! we hope you enjoyed your holidays!**

In this fifth issue of the ECML Newsletter we would like to draw your attention on a real problem: the relation between violence and computer games. When I sat down to write this editorial and started doing some research, what I discovered startled me. This is not a physiological or pedagogical scientific critical article, but the issues are very serious indeed and the evidence is very real! So I'd like to share my personal ideas with you.

Video and computer games are periodically criticized in the media by some parents' groups, psychologists, religious organisations, or politicians for the level of violence, cruelty, and crime that some games allow players to act out. Nevertheless, this is not a new matter. In 1976, Death Race became one of the first controversial video games; based on the film Death Race 2000, it allowed players to drive around in a car, in order to run down „gremlins“. However, many players and critics inferred that the game actually simulated vehicular homicide – particularly considering that the game's original title was „Pedestrian“. Its implied violence was immediately decried.

Some video games appear to be a bad influence on children while others are not. Scientific opinions are fairly divided on this issue however some kids play violent games and become violent; other kids play violent games and do not become more aggressive. It seems to be just one piece in a complex puzzle of why children are violent.

Some children become violent without exposure to violent imagery. Others remain passive no matter what they play. One thing is undisputed, however - violent children watch violent movies and play violent video games.

Contrary to popular opinion and previous research, a month of playing a particularly violent computer game had no effect on player aggressiveness, finds Dmitri Williams, PhD, assistant professor of Speech Communication at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (<http://www.news.uiuc.edu/news/05/0809videogames.html>)

Williams looked at a particular kind of computer game - a mass multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG) called Asheron's Call 2 or AC2. This kind of game is quickly becoming the most popular form of online game: players must fend off attacks from various monsters armed with different weapons. When killed, the monsters gush blood

and writhe in agony. Williams' conclusion is: Players' „robust exposure” to a highly violent online game did not cause any substantial real-world aggression.

However, this new study findings do not tell us much about the possible long-term effects of violent video games on children since most participants were adults.

There is not only negative aspects and critics on video games. For example, Steven Johnson in „Everything Bad Is Good for You: How Today's Popular Culture Is Actually Making Us Smarter”, claims that video games, television and movies are more complex than ever, to the benefit of viewers' cognitive skills. Whether we are mastering the intricacies of the simulation game SimCity or tracking the multiple plotlines in the TV drama 24, we are using “mental skills that are just as important as the ones exercised by reading books,” Johnson writes. Video games enhance our problem-solving and decision-making skills as we test the limits of a game's logic; the aliens we are blasting are secondary. After making similar arguments for television, film and the Internet, he proposes that this increasingly challenging media environment may help explain the upward trend in IQ scores. Johnson also addresses video-game violence with more opinion than science. Even though he maintains that content does not matter, he often underplays the violent objectives of popular games. I am personally not convinced that the cognitive skills derived from building a virtual city equal those gleaned from shooting cops and innocent bystanders!

Violence is not only in video and computer games ... these are certainly only one factor of many that might lead to violent behaviour of children. A problem is the representation of violence in the environment in general - including other media (TV series, newspapers, songs, etc.) and the environment at home and at school whenever and wherever violence is shown as a possibility to solve problems.

Personally, I do not approve violent computer, video or Internet games because I think they are a bad model for children but also for adults. I am also against violent films or news on television since they provoke a group feeling. For example, in Italy nowadays kids like to throw stones from the flyovers on the highways. Now the TV news decided not to say anything about this topic, otherwise others do the same, as it happened many times in the last month.

At the end, I can say that Johnson has persuaded me that a game can be used as a good start for discussions between children and adults which might prove much more useful than censorship. Perhaps some of what is bad is good, but certainly not everything! For sure, we need to increase the media literacy of the children, we should not be afraid and not censor and forbid the use of any game involving virtual reality!

Are you also interested in this matter? You can read some interesting articles in this issue of the [emlr](#).

Would you like to share your ideas or opinions? Why don't you participate to the ECML on-line community: [http://community.eun.org/entry\\_page.cfm?area=1794](http://community.eun.org/entry_page.cfm?area=1794), in the English forum there is a discussion going on with the title “**Go play games!**” about these topics!

Before letting you read the newsletter, I would like to point out that the ECML project is organising two events: one in Austria and one in Italy. Please see the news section below for specific details. Everyone interested is welcome at both events; there will be experts in the field, teachers, students, researchers, all with a flair for media.

Enjoy reading!

Elena Murelli  
ECML Project Manager  
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Italy

## news I

The Centre for Social Innovation (CSI) is organising a national workshop on media competences - e-learning - e-skills from the perspectives of pedagogy and economy („**Fit für das digitale Zeitalter! Medienkompetenz und e-Skills aus pädagogischer und wirtschaftlicher Perspektive**“).

This event is going to be held on the 21st of October, 2005 in Vienna in German language. The invited international speakers (Tapio Varis - UNESCO Chair in Global e-Learning and Professor at the University of Tampere, Finland and Franz Gramlinger from CEDEFOP) will provide an international outreach, national experts will discuss in a panel and participants will have the opportunity to work together and exchange ideas in two parallel workshops: „Media literacy in the pedagogical practice“ and „e-skills for the future professions“.

More information on the event: <http://www.zsi.at/symposium>

Detailed programme: [http://www.zsi.at/symposium\\_programm.html](http://www.zsi.at/symposium_programm.html)

Registration: [http://www.zsi.at/symposium\\_anmeldung.html](http://www.zsi.at/symposium_anmeldung.html)

Contact: [symposium@zsi.at](mailto:symposium@zsi.at)

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## news II

The **ecml** project presents the Italian workshop on media and media education, which will take place at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan, on October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2005.

Everyone interested in media education is welcome, there will be experts in the field, teachers, students, researchers, all with a flair for media.

The idea that lies behind this event is to make people discuss and outline the potential of media education and its future in Italy. Will there be the possibility to teach it at school? If so, how are teachers going to put it into practice?

More information on the event:

<http://ecml.pc.unicatt.it/italian/events/workshop/subscribe.htm>

Workshop presentation (pdf, Italian):

[http://ecml.pc.unicatt.it/download/italian\\_workshop\\_presentation.pdf](http://ecml.pc.unicatt.it/download/italian_workshop_presentation.pdf) (56.4 KB)

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## articles

### Let's play games

This issue of the **emlr** is concerned with a popular leisure activity especially among adolescents – computer, video and internet games. Most often the topic is explored in connection with violence and its effects on gamers. Here comes a selection of studies that have been carried out on this matter:

#### **Violent Video Games: Myths, Facts and Unanswered Questions**

by Craig A. Anderson

Violence in the media is a much debated topic. This short article lists facts and myths of the effects of video games on violent behaviour:

<http://www.apa.org/science/psa/sb-anderson.html>

#### **The Effects of Violent Video Game Habits on Adolescent Hostility, Aggressive Behaviors, and School Performance**

By Douglas A Gentile et al.

As the title indicates this extensive article explores effects of video game violence on adolescents:

[http://www.psychology.iastate.edu/faculty/dgentile/Gentile\\_Lynch\\_Linder\\_Walsh\\_2004.pdf](http://www.psychology.iastate.edu/faculty/dgentile/Gentile_Lynch_Linder_Walsh_2004.pdf)

#### **Children and Violent Video Games: Are There "High Risk" Players?**

By Jeanne B. Funk

This article is concerned with the question of who is particularly vulnerable to possible negative influences from playing violent video games:

<http://culturalpolicy.uchicago.edu/conf2001/papers/funk1.html>

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## media literacy organisation of the month

### digiplay initiative

The Digiplay Initiative does research about computer games, gamers and the gaming industry. Europe as a whole is a more lucrative gaming market than either the US or Japan. Many youths play computer games every day. On the website you can find research papers and gaming literature, facts about gaming as well as links to other organisations working on computer games:

<http://www.digiplay.org.uk/>

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### events calendar

**new** Ars Electronica Festival 2005

September 1-6, 2005

Linz (Austria)

The rapid ongoing abrogation of boundaries and fusions in art, technology and society will occupy the focal point of the 2005 Ars Electronica Festival. A profusion of fascinating events, conferences, symposia, exhibitions and performances will open up insights into the state-of-the-art of international media culture.

<http://www.aec.at/en/festival>

**new** ALT-C 2005: exploring the frontiers of e-learning - borders, outposts and migration

September 6-8, 2005

Manchester (UK)

The conference is for practitioners and researchers from all sectors involved in e-learning, and for those interested in benefiting from introducing technologies in education.

<http://www.alt.ac.uk/altc2005>

**new** Young People and New Technologies

September 7-9, 2005

Northampton (UK)

Youth are among the heaviest and most dynamic users of a variety of new technologies – the various facets of the internet, mobile phones, digital television, games consoles, digital music players, etc. It is clear that levels of access and use are subject to considerable variations in quantity and quality. This conference will provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and findings focused upon a variety of themes, from questions of access, to use of technologies in education, to the role of new media in youth subcultures.

<http://www.youth-study.org.uk>

**new** International Conference on the Book

September 11-13

Oxford (UK)

The conference will address a range of critically important themes relating to the book and its surrounds – including the past, present and future of publishing, libraries, information, literacy and learning in the information society. Main speakers will include some of the world's leading thinkers and innovators in the areas of publishing, editing, librarianship, printing, authoring and information technologies, as well as numerous paper, colloquium and workshop presentations by researchers and practitioners.

<http://book-conference.com>

**new** SETT 2005 - The Scottish Learning Festival

September 21-22, 2005

Glasgow (UK)

SETT is the national event that inspires and transforms education practice across Scotland. The programme provides opportunities for professional development, sharing skills and knowledge, and investigating and experimenting with new technology.

<http://www.LTScotland.org.uk/sett>

ICL 2005

September 28-30, 2005

Villach (Austria)

This interdisciplinary conference aims to focus on the exchange of relevant trends and research results as well as the presentation of practical experiences gained while developing and testing elements of interactive computer aided learning. Therefore pilot projects, applications and products will also be welcome.

<http://www.icl-conference.org>

5. Jahrestagung der Österreichischen Gesellschaft für Forschung und Entwicklung im Bildungswesen

September 29-October 1, 2005

Linz (Austria)

The orientation of education on competences which are directly related to practical applicability and relevance is going to be questioned in this symposium.

<http://www.oefeb.at>

**new** EDEN Fifth Open Classroom Conference

October 5-7, 2005

Poitiers (France)

The conference bears the title: Teachers' Professional Development, addressing eLearning, Innovation & Quality in Schooling, focusing on the ever-increasing needs of teachers, that are imposed by the emerging e-learning paradigms, the search for new, more effective school structures and the broader challenges that societies are facing in their way towards what has been identified as the Knowledge Economy.

<http://www.eden-online.org>

**new** wienervideo&filmtage

October 5-9, 2005

Vienna (Austria)

A festival to show and discuss about video and film for young people. Film makers are between 8 and 22 years old, the best will receive a prize and the entry for others to watch is free. Deadline for your contributions: September 2, 2005!

<http://www.videoundfilmtage.at>

**new** eLearning in a new Europe

October 6-8, 2005

Eisenstadt (Austria)

The main topics of the workgroups are: ICT-applications for curricular; ICT-teacher-training in vocational schools; Content-brokerage; Legal aspects of eLearning; ICT-services and educational portals; Standards for eContent; ICT-Strategy in the framework of national and educational standards and goals in Austria; ICT-indicators related to practice; Good examples of learning objects (LO) on national and international level; Mediapedagogical reflections and gendersensitive aspects on ICT.

<http://www.enis.at/elearning-conference>

**new** Aesthetics of play

October 14-15, 2005

Bergen (Norway)

The conference addresses the diversity of cultural meanings as they are expressed in computer game technology and software. Warcraft and horror games are also going to be a point of discussion during the event.

<http://www.aestheticsofplay.org>

**new** eChallenges

October 19-21, 2005

Ljubljana (Slovenia)

Focusing on eBusiness, eGovernment, eWork, eEurope beyond 2005 and ICT take-up by SMEs and International Co-operation on IST, the goal of e-2005 is to stimulate take-up of Research & Technology Development (RTD) results by industry, in particular SMEs, and the European public sector.

<http://www.echallenges.org/2005/default.asp>

**new Fit für das digitale Zeitalter!**

October 21, 2005

Vienna (Austria)

The Austrian ecml partner, the Centre for Social Innovation, organises a national symposium on media competences, e-learning and e-skills from the perspectives of pedagogy and economy. Participants will have the opportunity to exchange ideas in two parallel workshops: "Media literacy in pedagogical practice" and "E-skills for future professionals".

<http://www.zsi.at/symposium>

**new** Fano International Film Festival

October 24-29, 2005

Fano (Italy)

Fano Film Festival has become a landmark for filmmakers, experts and the specialized press as a significant and qualifying moment for the whole genuine independent national and overseas cinema. Its main aim is to promote the release of films young directors have shot whose innovating, refining, artistic language and meanings are able to express new ideas, themes and subjects. During the event there will also be the chance to participate to workshops, exhibitions by taking part to the world of movies and short films through specialised schools.

<http://www.fanofilmfestival.it/englishindex.htm>

**new** eP2005 – International ePortfolio Conference

October 27-28, 2005

Cambridge (UK)

ePortfolio will bring together experts and practitioners to present and discuss progress in this rapidly developing field. It is organised by the European Institute for E-Learning (EifEL).

<http://www.eife-l.org/portfolio/ep2005>

**new Vivere, comprendere, insegnare i media: prospettive di educazione ai/con i media**

October 31, 2005

Milan (Italy)

The Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore will hold an ecml Workshop on Media and Media Education in Milan.

<http://ecml.pc.unicatt.it/italian/events/workshop/subscribe.htm>

**new** Innovation and Media: Managing Changes in Technology, Products and Processes

November 11-12, 2005

Stockholm (Sweden)

The main objective of the workshop is to promote discussions on how media companies are currently embracing innovation, the levels at which they are doing so, and how their development needs can be best met in the future.

<http://www.ihh.hj.se>

**new** 7th GAME-ON Conference

November 14-16, 2005

Angoulême (France)

This International Computer Games Conference is one of the leading research conferences devoted to the advancement of the theory and practice of games development.

**new** 11<sup>th</sup> Online Educa

November 30-December 2, 2005

Berlin (Germany)

The International Conference on Technology Supported Training and Learning will help to better understand e-learning and its role in private and public sectors, at universities, in society; the design, development and delivery as well as future technologies and applications, quality assessment and evaluation, etc.

<http://www.online-educa.com/en>

**YOUKI 2005**

November 21-25, 2005

Wels (Austria)

7th International Youth Media Festival

<http://www.youki.at/>

**new** Grenzenlose Cyberwelt? - Digitale Ungleichheit und neue Bildungszugänge für Jugendliche

February 9-11, 2006

Bielefeld (Germany)

<http://www.kib-bielefeld.de/tagung/>

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