

IGF 2016

Workshop Report

Session Title:

The Internet of Toys & Things

Date: 5th December, 2016

Workshop Organizer: European NGO Alliance for Child Safety Online (John Carr)

Chairperson/Moderator: Larry Magid

Rapporteur: Christiana de Paoli (Save the Children, Italy)

List of Speakers:

Larry Magid, Connect Safely

Professor Sonia Livingstone, LSE

Professor Kathryn Montgomery, the American University

John Carr, European NGO Alliance for Child Safety Online

Professor Livingstone summarised those aspects of the EU Kids Online research and the emerging findings of the Global Kids Online project which touched on the scale of childrens' and young people's engagement with the internet and the nature of that engagement. People below the age of 18 now made up 1 in 3 of all internet users in the world, rising to almost 1 in 2 in parts of the developing world.

Professor Montgomery summarised the background to the adoption of the COPPA legislation in the USA and argued that the age of 13 still had contemporary relevance. Professor Montgomery then focused on the emerging research evidence about how connected toys were both commercially exploitative of minors and were also transgressing their rights to privacy

John Carr explained how toys fitted into the wider framework of the internet of things and highlighted recent examples where security failures e.g. DDOS attacks, had compromised both the safety of individuals, the continued commercial operation of online businesses as well as potentially impacting on key aspects of the infrastructure of modern societies.

Larry Magid focused on how the UNCRC was intended to guarantee or underpin children's and young people's rights to access the internet and other media to obtain information and express themselves and the way in which some connected toys could be used to limit those rights e.g. in terms of the possibility of withdrawing consent. In addition Larry Magid highlighted worries about parents' lack of awareness of how connected toys worked, the data they collected and how they were used and at the same time how connected toys could also help an abusive parent to exercise un reasonable control or supervision of their children's lives.

There was a broadly based consensus that more research was needed about what the appropriate age levels are in terms of young people's engagement with the modern internet and the wide variety of behaviours which it could now facilitate.

There was also a broadly based consensus about the urgency of addressing security failures, particularly in relation to connected devices such as toys, but there are others, which are likely to be heavily used by or will be in close proximity to children and young people.

A lot more needs to be done to ensure that parents and children are aware of the data collecting aspects of how connected toys operate.