# About This Issue

It's been a year now since the two of us first sat down to talk about doing some sort of publication devoted to video and kids. Our ideas have changed a lot since then.

At first, we simply said we would gather together everything we knew and put together a book. Fortunately time caught up with us. The more we worked in video the less we seemed to know and the more we saw that there was to learn. Looking back, we realized that in our first years of working with video and kids we had immersed ourselves so completely that when we finally came up for air, we were gasping not for reflections but for fresh ideas.

At the same time we encountered some educational backlash. In face of increasing pressures in schools to return to "the basic," we began to question the value of the new technologies. As media missionaries, we still had strong inner beliefs but no longer seemed able to articulate successfully the reasons for our enthusiasm about video. The Gospel approach had come to an end. It was now necessary for us to examine and rethink the state of two arts -- video and teaching.

To do this we needed help. A field had developed and we were out of touch with it. All sorts of video programs were operating in schools, storefront centers, hospitals, educational television stations and other weird sites from Maine to Miami and Sea to Shining Sea.

Yet it wouldn't do, we felt, to simply survey the field. Instead, we would need to locate a variety of individuals and institutions involved with using video and kids and give them the opportunity to talk about their own work.

The Things We Went Through For This

In June of 1973, we organized a meeting which brought together 15 people representing schools, universities, alternate video groups, libraries and themselves as individual video artists. Everyone agreed on two things: we felt isolated and we were having trouble sustaining our enthusiasm in face of myriad problems.

As our group talked about our feelings, we agreed that a guide for those using video in various educational environments was an obvious need. Collected resources could serve many: teachers just starting video work with kids, media artists serving residencies in schools, experienced teachers of media who want information about what others are doing, and school administrators who need to have supporting documentation for what their schools are doing.

We also felt it was important to share our work with each other before we sat down to write about it as individuals. So another meeting was scheduled for the fall. We promised to give ourselves time to really find out what each of us were into and to discuss common problems and goals. In the interim, it

1

was decided that everyone in the group would invite others to join the next meeting.

Because of the support we felt in the first meeting, the two of us anticipated the second one by beginning to think about a publication. It was a problem. We wanted to get the information to both educators interested in media and video specialists not yet working with kids. We wanted to do this as quickly as possible, in an inexpensive format with some guarantee of circulation. To publish something ourselves was an option, but not satisfactory in terms of distribution. On the other hand, going to a publisher would mean a loss of certain controls we wanted to maintain as well as a long wait between collecting materials and the publishing date.

We needed an alternative and found it in Radical Software. We approached the editors, Ira Schneider and Beryl Korot, and found encouragement and support for an issue devoted to the use of video with kids. We offered to take full responsibility in putting out the issue if, in turn, we could have control of production. They said okay and we began to move.

In October of 1973 the second meeting was held at the Center for Understanding Media. Our ranks had swelled to 25. It was a long, hard, exhausting, but in the end, a most satisfying day. Each individual and each group of people working together shared tapes and concerns. We went off feeling a lot better about our own work and a lot smarter about video in general.

And so it was time to write and edit. This is not to say that what follows in these 68 pages says it all. We are all still learners. What we have to give you in this issue are a few insights into the potential impact of video, a broad look at what's going on today in a variety of situations, and some specific ideas about how you can use video with kids. Thrown in too are some favorite resources and some samples of work.

That's the process we've gone through and you've got the product it yielded. Take this a a guide, use what you like. . .discard the rest. . . and when you get a chance, tell us something.

Peter Haratonik
Kit Laybourne

Mary Sheridan