



News Roundup

Consultation - Or Lip Service?

"The Office of Film and Literature Classification (OFLC) released a report on the *Public Submissions on Draft Computer Games Classification Guidelines* in January 1994.

Within two months, the OFLC not only called for, received and considered 318 submissions, but produced the final guidelines for the classification of computer games. AFCO....decided to investigate how much input consumers really had.

After examining the two sets of guidelines it is clear that the documents are not substantially different.

While the final guidelines are more detailed and stringent than the draft, it has to be questioned how the views of 318 participants could have been considered in a month that included the Christmas and New Year break.

And a report attached to the guidelines states that about 90 submissions arrived late.

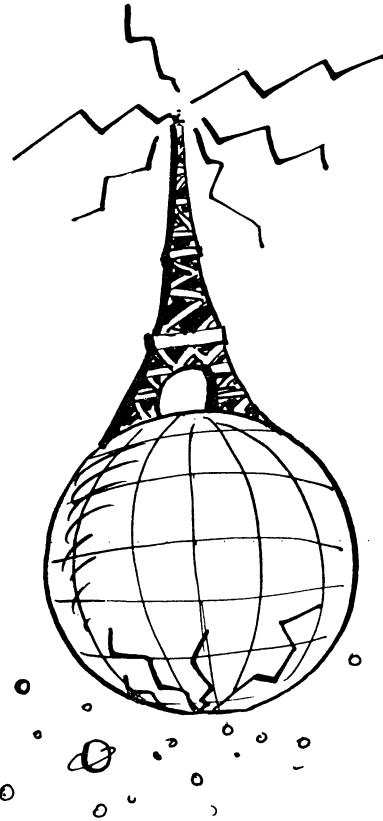
The important point about the guidelines is not whether changes have or have not been made but the lack of time given for public consultation. Indeed AFCO suspects that its submission arrived too late for consideration, and it is not the only one."

(From Consumer Action, newsletter of the Australian Federation of Consumer Organisations, Feb/Mar 1994)

Multimedia Hype

"Driven by giant corporate egos, the NIH (Not Invented Here) syndrome and the quest to exert proprietary control over a market, the proliferation of incompatible systems from hardware manufacturers is likely to continue for the next few years - making life more complex and risky for both the software community and the consumer. For the foreseeable future, the question of which platform to choose will remain something of a gamble, based on educated guesses about which formats will become dominant in the market."

From 'The Consumer Media Marketplace 1: Contenders', *Screen Digest*, March 1994, p.57.



New Defo Mag Hits Spot

Anyone with an interest in defamation law should get hold of a copy of a new periodical, *deFamed*.

Vol.1 No.1 was Feb 1994. In 33 pages are packed news items on major defamation cases (Bellino vs ABC, Ettingshausen); briefs on other matters of interest from around the nation; a roundup of published apologies (some of which are rather amusing); a selection of defamation cases overseas (including a list of damages awarded over a one year period in the UK; £450,00 was the top award); and sections on journalism, relevant publications and law reform.

Possibly the most interesting and useful aspect of *deFamed* is its 10 pages of summaries of judgements in unreported defamation cases since July 1992, along with some of the most significant reported cases.

This commendable publication is the work of the Publications Committee, Young Lawyers, Law Society of NSW. Subscription rates: \$60.00 for four issues from the above at DX 362 Sydney or 170 Phillip St Sydney 2000.

Free Market Rules, OK?

Ten years ago, the US telecommunications giant AT&T was broken up to form the seven regional companies known as 'Baby Bells'.

The aim was to reduce market domination; but a decade on, a study (reported in *Screen Digest* March 1994) found the seven Baby Bells continue to handle more than 95 per cent of phonecalls. The study was commissioned by AT&T and MCI Communications, who will use it in an attempt to prevent the Bells' entry into the lucrative long distance market.

Bell companies already reap \$US26,000m a year for connections to long distance calls, compared with a mere \$209m for their competitors. The study says that even if cable TV networks begin to offer telephone services, all but one per cent of the traffic will have to be routed over a Bell network.