

Kirsten Schneid

The whole world for a small sum

The “World Item Exchange”

*To be visible means that you exist.
To be asked for
means that you are important.
To be given a place in the media
shows that you have a place in society.*
(EBU Item Exchange motto)

Children’s television worldwide is often produced with the most humble resources. It is doubtful whether there is any children’s television producer who can boast of an adequate production budget. This makes co-productions and programme exchanges all the more important. An example of a highly effective programme exchange is the “World Item Exchange”, an initiative to exchange magazine items for children’s TV programmes. TV magazines made for preschool children worldwide profit from this practical idea.

The main principle of this exchange is as easy as it is effective: on the basis of standard rules, every participating broadcaster produces a minimum of five short TV magazine items. It’s those items which have an overall attraction and educational value to children all over the world that are accepted into the exchange programme. The contents of the magazine items vary from “children’s stories”, “how things are made”, “nature and animals”, to “the world around us”. The contributions are entered into a pool from which channels can choose as many programmes from other broadcasters as they want to show on their network. In an annual conference, producers meet to view, discuss and rate the different contri-

butions and select those that they will then show on their own networks licence-free.

The European Broadcasting Union (EBU) developed the idea of the “World Item Exchange” in 1975 and public broadcasters from Scandinavia to Eastern Europe, including Turkey, Israel and Egypt, have been actively participating. In 1992 the Asian Broadcasting Union (ABU) felt inspired by the EBU’s ideas for the item exchange and now 55 broadcasters have joined. Shortly following thereafter, in 1995, the ABU joined forces with the EBU. Ever since then they each send representatives from their countries to the annual conferences to present their continents’ best assortment of TV magazine items and select those from the other continents that they wish to broadcast in their home countries. In 2000 the African Broadcasting Union started an exchange of TV magazine items as well; unfortunately its future is not as secure as is desirable. The youngest members – since 2005 – in the “World Item Exchange” coalition are the Latin American countries. An expansion of the “World Item Exchange” into the Arab states is plan-



*Mobile Library (KTV Kenya)
The Inventor (MTV Mongolia)
Beatles (NRK Norway)*

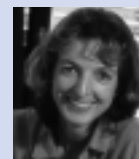
ned for the near future; discussions with the Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU) are already under way.

What began as a purely European initiative has grown into a global exchange with contributions from Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The “World Item Exchange” has proven to be an invaluable source for quality programming from around the world for those involved. With relatively low stakes, the networks receive up to 300 programmes yearly from countries in all continents. This initiative helps chil-

dren’s television producers all over the world to offer their young viewers their own, as well as foreign, cultures playfully – in spite of a low budget! ■

THE AUTHOR



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