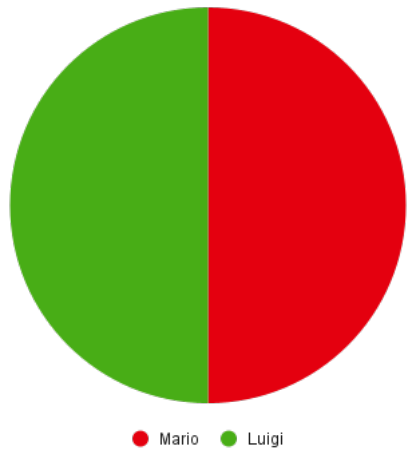


What's Your Opinion?

This week, we asked students which of the two Mario Brothers was their favorite.

Out of 66 responses:
Mario -- 33
Luigi -- 33



● Mario ● Luigi

Next Poll:

Scootin' Around

Do you think A-State should replace the Veo Scooters and Bikes with bikes and/or scooters from another company?

Students can answer the poll on The Herald's Instagram page, [@astateherald](#). Instagram polls are posted on Mondays. Previous poll results can be found on [the-herald.home.blog/category/opinion/poll/](#).

Have an idea for a poll? Send your ideas to heraldopinion1921@gmail.com.

These and future articles can be found on the Opinion section of The Herald's website. All comics and memes can be found in the Comics section.

LILY CABIBI-WILKIN

OPINION EDITOR



Lily Cabibi-Wilkin is a senior music composition major from Hot Springs.

As the age of technology goes on, more people will be exposed to technology from a younger age. My generation (Generation Z, anyone born between 1996 and 2012) saw the inception and rise of platforms like Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. We thought little about children using social media; unless your parents outright restricted you from using it you could easily put a fake age on your profile and carry on messaging your friends. You could talk to someone twice your age on Kik, or look at explicit imagery on Tumblr. We weren't quite Internet Latchkey Kids, but from what I remember it was a much more lawless age.

Obviously, this model had its flaws. Cyberbullying has been an issue since the beginning of the internet. Many of

Should Social Media Spaces Exist For Kids?

my generation were exposed to explicit content before they were at an appropriate age, whether this came from a grooming adult or an innocent search result. There is also the inherent damage done by social media platforms like Facebook or Instagram, which many argue encourage users to present an idealized version of themselves.

The solution up to now has been obvious: just don't let your kids use social media until they're old enough to handle it. Social media is, to an extent, a luxury: nobody needs a social media account, unless they are trying to get hired at a company which scrutinizes potential employees' social media accounts (a practice I find equally understandable and sketchy).

Generations X through Millennial seemed to do just fine with not having the entire world at their fingertips; the only "damage" being the occasional technological ineptitude. (For example: My Gen X parents never clear their phone notifications. Ever. If you are Gen X and you are reading this please clear your notifications. Your phone will thank you and run much better.)

I'm not saying there are no benefits to having social media accounts. I have learned things about the world and its cultures that someone 100 years ago would never think of. I've made friends from across the globe. But there is validity to the thought train that we should treat

social media like junk food: a wonderful invention, and good in controlled doses, but toxic at high volumes.

If this is all reasonable and agreeable, then why have we seen companies like YouTube and Instagram developing versions of their platforms specifically for children?

Let me answer that question with some more questions: What is the most impressionable demographic you could possibly have as a salesperson? How often do you see advertisements on YouTube and Instagram? How well do you remember the ads you saw on TV when you were a child?

You can probably see where I'm going with this. Sitting your child down with YouTube Kids for hours on end or allowing your preteens to use Instagram Kids exposes them to advertisements on a large scale. While there are laws about advertising to children, and YouTube Kids primarily has ads for YouTube Red, getting children used to being bombarded with ads from a young age seems pretty dystopian. You can imagine how bad the ads would be on Instagram Kids.

The platforms obviously will have further drawbacks. YouTube Kids, for example, has faced issues with content marked for children that contains disturbing imagery (for example, "Elsagate"). Though

the development of Instagram Kids was paused last week, I have my suspicions it would have been any better: after all, if children can lie about their age to use regular Instagram, what's to stop adults from lying about their age to use Instagram Kids?

One more thing to think about: Even if these platforms were perfect, would kids in the demographic actually use them? What's the point of YouTube Kids if the kids are going to get bored of the restricted content and go back to using regular YouTube? I asked my youngest brother, who is 11, for his thoughts.

"Have you ever used YouTube Kids?" I asked.

"No," he said. "It sucks. I don't think I will ever use it ever."



Art by Fran Bollinger | Content Creator

Amazon Astro: Is A Cute Robot Worth The Price of Privacy?

LILY CABIBI-WILKIN

OPINION EDITOR

Are you the type of person who talks to their electronics?

Do you have an Alexa, or a Google Home? Do you see her as a family member, or a tool?

Have you seen movies like "WALL-E" or "I, Robot?" Have you played games like Detroit: Become Human? Has that affected your perception of real-life robots?

When you think of a robot dog, what do you think of? The plastic Tekno Toys from the 90s? The Boston Dynamics robots? The lawn roombas? Do you think they are cute? Do you place some form of humanity on them?

I'm not saying the illusion of humanity we regularly place on inanimate objects is inherently bad. I regularly scold objects in my room from falling off shelves, and mumble affirmations to my phone when it won't load something I'm trying to show someone. I have, on occasion, seen one of the lawn roombas roaming campus, then pointed and declared, "There goes the boy!" In the moment, it's not a bad

habit. The problem arises when we place so much humanity on electronics that it clouds our judgement.

Amazon has recently announced Astro, a robot with a facial recognition camera, a touchscreen "face," a navigational system similar to a roomba's and a cup holder. Astro also has a cute, doglike stature and two circular eyes, evoking a "WALL-E"-like image. For \$999, you can bring Jeff Bezos' newest surveillance machine into your household. In the "Introducing Amazon Astro" commercial, Astro can be seen following homeowners around, checking on stoves, dancing, delivering beers, facilitating video calls and patrolling a house at night to keep out errant raccoons. All of these things, you may notice, are things you can do with technology that already exists.

So, if you can use your phone to video call and play music, your body to check stoves and grab beers or a home security system to keep intruders out of your home, what makes Astro palatable? The cute appearance, obviously. Astro can smile and emote with its screen, and its size makes it look harmless.

If your thoughts on the Astro are

along the lines of, "aww, cute robot," then that's totally fine. If you're thinking about the "Vacubot" from the "Love, Death & Robots" episode "Automated Customer Service," then you're riding on my train of thought.

"By the time my kids are old enough to watch 'Black Mirror' it's going to be a documentary series."
-- @hella_leigh on Twitter

For an example of further robot-skepticism, look no further than the situation with Boston Dynamics' "Spot" robot. The "Digidog" has made appearances on the New York Police Department force, helping officers gather information about dangerous situations without risking human life. It has also been seen in the Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, MA, facilitating video calls through a mounted iPad and radio.

Though the uses of "Spot" are more obvious, many have drawn comparisons with the design to the robots in the "Metalhead" episode of "Black Mirror," where a woman is chased and killed by

robotic dogs inspired by the "Digidogs." In New York, the NYPD canceled their contract with Boston Dynamics after backlash from citizens, who called the dogs "creepy" and raised concerns of the dogs being used for improper surveillance or militarization.

In this expanding technological era, I understand that everyone has different levels of comfort with their electronic presence. Some are fine with sharing their location on social media at all times, relying on their Ring doorbells and their Alexas for home maintenance. Others get mad when someone holds a cell phone too close to them, and do their best to keep any identifying information about them off the internet.

I understand that there is only so much we can do these days, but I see no need to put a cute face on a robot that follows you around your house, listening to your every word and sending your conversations to Amazon headquarters. I fear our society may get so attached to "cute" technology like the Astro that we will not be able to put the robot down when it inevitably bites us.

THE HERALD

COURTNEY EDWARDS: EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
courtney.edwards@smail.astate.edu

JONATHAN SCHAUFLE: NEWS EDITOR
heraldnews1921@gmail.com

REBECCA ROBINSON: SPORTS EDITOR
heraldsports1921@gmail.com

LILY CABIBI-WILKIN: OPINION EDITOR
heraldopinion1921@gmail.com

ALEX CLARK: LIFE EDITOR
heraldlife1921@gmail.com

HANNAH RISKER: PHOTO EDITOR
heraldphoto1921@gmail.com

DREW MORGAN: GRAPHIC DESIGN EDITOR
heraldonline1921@gmail.com

SANDRA L. COMBS: ADVISER; ADVERTISEMENT SALES
scombs@astate.edu
astateherald@gmail.com

THE HERALD OFFICE IS IN ROOM 224 OF THE COMMUNICATIONS/EDUCATION BUILDING.

NEWSROOM: 870-972-3076

AD OFFICE: 870-972-2961

FAX: 870-972-3339

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