Toy market plays with retro return

Manufacturers will try to market old toys with a new spin this holiday season

Alicia Collins
Staff Reporter

To the season for the technologically advanced.

Although it is still a little early to look in detail at the novelties, the biggest changing day of the year has passed with parents (frantically) rushing for the perfect gift for their children.

The majority of the University’s students were born between 1983 and 1987, and children’s Christmas wish lists definitely have changed during the years.

Ginger Gardner, toy department manager of Wal-Mart in Bloomington, Ill., said companies seem to be attractively advanced.

"Companies are being reintroduced to attract children with electronic toys. Now some of these toys are really fun, children don’t have a lot of control over what happens to them," she said.

"We may have been worried about tech toys being too far away from reality," Gardner said. "Cabbage Patch is coming back very heavily," she said. "They’re introducing the electronic and hello’s, and little girls love them.”

Gardner said Bratz dolls have been more popular than Barbie recently because they draw similarly to how girls dress today.

"For a while Bratz seemed to be taking over Barbie, but Barbie got a little bigger this year, and Bratz got a little smaller, so they’re taking up the same amount of shelf space in the toy department," she said.

The Aunt Paradise also has been introduced to allow children to play articles like the Atari Flashback.

"It allows users to play all the Atari games on one system, Gardner said. "It allows them to actually do what they saw on the screen." When University students were younger, toys included items such as Barbies, GI-Joes, Cabbage Patch Dolls and Legos. Now some of these toys are really fun, children don’t have a lot of control over what happens to them," said.

"Children are going to be the Star Station by Fisher-Price,” she said. “It’s a little more self-expression with the simple toys that don’t have a directed path that the kids have to follow.”

Frederick Hill

"There is such a variety of toys today that can be more specific to children’s personalities,” she said. “However, I think this variety can be overwhelming, and kids can be disappointed easier because they have all the toys that any other child exactly which ones they want.”

Gardner said that although technology can help move the way toys appeal to children, the toys are helpful for children.

"Companies are taking it far. “Companies have cell phones for children, and even Walkie-Talkies have text messaging now, so parents might want to think about what they’re getting their children,” she said.

"I think the increase in technological toys is a negative addition to society. The commercials I see for the electronic games and toys don’t make kids lazy because they can just sit around and watch their toys instead of interact with them.”

"Society is evolving to a state where part of life can be done without moving. Wheels can be allowed to continue to roll and be active when they play,” he said. "Things are going downhill as far as laziness and obesity are concerned, and we are just making it easier for the decline to continue.”

In addition to the negative aspects of newer toys, Wilkes said there are other reasons old toys continue to prevail.

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"Although electronic games and toys are really fun, children don’t have to think what is going on,” he said. "With Barbies and other simple toys, kids have complete control of what happens in their play, and there can be a lot more self-expression with the simple toys that don’t have a directed path that the kids have to follow.”

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