How and Why to Read and Create Children's Digital Books

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Conclusion

You have reached the end of this book but I hope you do not feel it is finished. I have tried to structure this book as an ongoing journey that needs to be completed by other people. If you come across inspirational practices, resources or studies in this area and would like to share them with others please get in touch with me.

An important characteristic of children's reading on screen, which I hope I have conveyed through this book, is its personalised aspect. We all can be authors of children's digital books and personalise what they read and what we read with them. Children and their parents, teachers and other caring adults can create a digital book for and with other children in their class. Through this, the quality and value of children's digital books will be gradually increased. This process needs to be agentic and reciprocal to ensure that the ‘personalisation’ is not a tokenistic buzzword but a genuine and felt experience for everyone involved.

Digital books are an integral part of children's contemporary reading practices; this book aims to raise awareness of their potential as well as their current limitations. With an underpinning that reading is a social practice, I have foregrounded shared and communal uses of digital books, ranging from one-to-one adult–child reading at home to buddy reading at school and international online reading hubs.

With various children's smartphone and tablet apps, teachers can make books for and with children, practising vital literacy skills and learning together with and about each other. With multimodal story-making apps, teachers can add not only texts and pictures but also sounds to accompany their stories. The digital format allows teachers to update their stories periodically and flexibly, breaking away from the rigidity of the traditional print format. A collaborative story-making process is likely to be followed by joint story-sharing, a unique part of the story cycle. I hope that the suggestions, tips and examples in this book will empower you to try to experience this cycle.
I have been fortunate to observe how authoring stories empowers families and fosters a space where unclaimed identities can be celebrated. Parents and caregivers too can be authors of digital books and engage in story authorship for or with their children. The digital format can facilitate the expression of meaning in various modes and the distribution of stories among various language and culture groups. The importance of dialogue and the child’s own agency in accessing and enjoying stories needs to be taken into account when discussing and facilitating the use of children’s digital books. Children’s active participation is a key driver for many publishers and producers of story-making apps, resources and spaces. The processes of story-making and story-sharing can be acts of active vocalisation of one’s life story.

To conclude, stories are an essential dynamic of life, and digital technologies can grant them posterity, discoverability and geographical advantage. The world of children’s digital stories is growing exponentially; large community platforms are crowdsourcing and curating multimedia stories, and smart toys are interconnecting virtual and physical story worlds. The future will be bright if we allow stories to be the universal force that binds diverse communities, calls forth agency in adults and children and accounts for the complementarity between physical and virtual spaces.