

# Klaudyna Mikulewicz

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## Review of Literature for Children: Texts, Readers and Educational Practices, P.I.E Peter Lang, Brussels 2015

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## ***Review of Literature for Children: Texts, Readers and Educational Practices, P.I.E Peter Lang, Brussels 2015***

This well written book describes the results of a research project devoted to the problem of digital literary education. I would recommend it to anyone who is interested in digital children's literature or children's literature in general. It seems especially valuable for parents and teachers with the task of putting the child in the world of literature in a dual form. Adults face the challenge of showing kids digital readings, while appreciating traditional works in printed form.

This Volume of Digital Literature for Children was instigated on the initiative of UAB and contains research into the impact of digitization on teaching literature and literary education. The aim of the publication is to act as a guide in relation to changes in schools and the creation of an inclusive strategy for multimedia and interactive texts and products to market fictional works and products. Respected researchers from around the world, such as Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer and Junko Yokota (a member of the research group GRETEL) were invited to cooperate. The group was established in 2004 and has been researching children's literature in compulsory education, including its digital form. The publication itself is divided into five parts, within which each of the authors describe relevant issues.

The first part, entitled Contextualisation and Theoretical Framework, opens with a text answering Laura Borràs question about what reading on screen means from the point of view of social and cultural change. The author focuses mainly on child readers and gives a brief outline of new and complex media and refers to the spread of forms of digital literature. Another text by Lucas Ramada Prieto "*Common Places in Children's E-Lit*". *A Journey through the Defining Spaces of Electronic Literature* introduces a large number of areas of knowledge of children's literature, and gives the terminology necessary to present the concept of electronic literature used for children's literature. This chapter is definitely worth reading because it is clearly written and gives basic information.

The second part is devoted to digital literature for children and young adults. However, this is not a dry analysis of digital products, but first and foremost a reflection on the potential for literary education. Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer describes the impact of new digital media on literature for children and young people, focusing at the same time on the relationship between the production of the targeted market of children's literature and electronic media. In this section their mutual influence is described, exemplified by phenomenon of fan fiction. Junko Yokota, meanwhile, takes the reader on a journey through

time describing the past, present and future of digital picturebooks aimed at children. The emphasis here is on the role of parents and teachers in the selection and assessment of digital readings. The author describes the current state of electronic publishing with regard to stories for children in order to compare them with paper picturebooks and describe differences in the ways the child reader is influenced. In addition to this, Celia Turrión Penelas gives an exact outline of the characteristics of narrative apps, thereby creating an accurate model analysis. In doing so, the potential that electronic literature possesses to encourage reading and literary education is described. In many examples, tendencies prevailing in market applications, as well as the designing of narrative apps are exhaustively described. The author comments upon the market-value of applications, while also noting that a lot of poor, simple works can still be found, which do not make use of the potential arising from a combination of the narrative complexity of multimodality and interactive applications.

The third part of the book focuses on digital readers and literature. Mireia Manresa describes analysis of the experience of readers of five digital works aiming to test the level of understanding of electronic literature and ways of interpreting digital content of three groups of children. The author draws attention to the two focal points affecting the reactions of young readers and their introduction to interactive literary works, which require different skills than reading printed books. Lucas Ramada Prieto and Lara Reyes López create the profiles of four young readers who are not familiar with the touch screen and digital readings. Children rated as more gifted readers, also performed better in reading digital versions of books. Despite the small number of respondents, during interviews the authors noted the children's willingness to explore and their ludic attitude while reading digital versions. Studies have shown the need for help in identifying the elements of digital literature, that is, music or movement and elimination of decorative elements that disturb the understanding of the story. Martina Fittipaldi, Anna Juan and Mireia Manresa conclude this section by comparing the experiences of teenagers reading the same work on paper and its digital version, which show differences in the interpretation of the text which is read. Meanwhile, these differences in interpretation are thoroughly analyzed and described in detail by the authors.

The fourth part of the book is devoted to educational practices, both in schools and those applied by parents in the home. Cristina Aligas and Anna M. Margallo describe interesting results from long-term ethnographic research in the section entitled iPads, beginner readers and family. They tested four middle-class families using the iPad for shared reading with a child. In the studies, particular attention was paid to the time and place of the common reading, its configuration and the use of the iPad, the process of learning to read and the interaction between the child, parent and device, as well as the impact of interactive content applications on the reading experience. Neus Real and Cristina Corroero consider the debate over the use of touch devices by small children. In connection with this, the authors describe differences in the preferences of young readers in contact with devices in the home and in nursery school, depending in which space they are located. The authors emphasize the importance of allowing children under the age of seven new types

of reading experience that complement the traditional teaching of reading. This chapter ends with a description of the research carried out by Teresa Colomer and Karla Fernández de Gamboa Vázquez on the effect of the introduction of digital works to the school library. The authors ask themselves how it will affect the habits of reading, what the preferences of children will be and how they assess these works. Studies have shown the real possibility of integration of digital literature in the class library and the beneficial effects of its introduction, not diminishing the importance of printed literature.

The last part of the book is in the form of a summary of the publication as a whole and presents a reflection on the creation of digital texts. Kate Pullinger describes how, with Chris Joseph, she developed a series of interactive stories, *Inanimate Alice*, one of the most popular digital stories in the world. In the last section *Change of Direction* Arnal Ballester considers the profound social and cultural change, and takes into account the relationship between children's print and digital literature, video games and illustrations. This section suggests a new look at the changing relationship between knowledge and literary creation.

To sum up, through a combination of theoretical and more practical oriented chapters, this publication is a rich source of knowledge for anyone interested in the phenomenon of digitization of children's literature, including those unfamiliar with the subject.