

Launch

Kids

January 13, 2015

New York

About Launch Kids

Focused on the future of the children's book publishing business, Launch Kids is a one-day conference that examines how traditional publishers and new and emerging digital content providers can reach and teach kids of all ages through new media, devices, and technology.

Topics and themes at Launch Kids 2015 include: Children's Tech, the Year in Review and Trends for 2015; Kids' eBooks and the Children's Entertainment and Educational Media Landscape; Traditional and Digital Kids' Book Marketing; Google for Education; Digital in the Classroom; eBook Subscriptions, from Home to School; What Kickstarter Is Doing for Children's Literature and Children's Lit Publishers; The Art and Business of Digital Storytelling; Fan Fiction and Engaging with Fan Communities; Personalization and the Story; and more.

This ebook includes essays from a few of the 30 featured Launch Kids speakers to provide additional context in advance of the event. Register now:

**Tuesday, January 13, 2015 | 8:30am – 5:30pm
Part of Digital Book World Week**

Visit the Digital Book World Conference site for the [full program](#), [speakers](#), and [registration details](#).

The Art and the Science of the Children's eBook

by Warren Buckleitner, Editor, *Children's Technology Review*

Throughout the ages, children's storytellers have tapped into the state-of-the-art to practice their craft. Whether it was achieved with charcoal drawings and shadows from a torch, or color ink in the case of Beatrix Potter, the goal is always the same: to educate and delight a child. Today's state-of-the-art technology comes in the form of a slim glass tablet with day-long batteries, multi-touch screens and the ability to access the Internet. Gone are keyboards, wires and complexity. A 21st century child has two kinds of bookshelves: one with traditional printed books, plus a virtual bookshelf that is in the cloud. Titles are stored in a virtual closet managed by iTunes, Google Play or Amazon, or perhaps in one of many content management services that are popping up. Online stores reach across borders, permitting a storyteller's ideas to flow around the world at the speed of light, often in your choice of language. These are exciting times.

The BolognaRagazzi Digital Award was established in 2011 to identify best practices in this emerging category of commercial products, on a global scale. The six winners serve as guideposts for others. But the prize initiative digs up a lot more than just a list of winners. As we made our journey through this year's entries, we made notes on what worked or didn't work. If you're in the digital storytelling business you can learn from someone else's mistakes. We also made a video (<http://youtu.be/bAHkW4SYaFU>) in which we discussed the entries.

eBook, Defined: "Narrative Driven Interactive Media"

We understand that an ebook can be many things to different people. For the purposes of this prize, we define an ebook as "narrative driven interactive media" or an interactive work based around some sort of story. We didn't consider products with no story involved. We also didn't consider non-interactive products, such as digitized printed books presented as PDFs or on e-readers. This year, we broke the entries into fiction and nonfiction.

Why a Product Didn't Win

In many contests, it is common to end by issuing a press release and some trophies, and then start thinking about next year. Not with this one. We are equally interested in understanding these fascinating products from an objective vantage point. We want to know—and share—what's working and what's not. So we want to be just as clear about what counts as dust as well as what gets the prize. In that spirit, here are some common attributes of the many non-winning products we encountered.

- Sprinkled with hot spots, as in "it's been sprinkled" with animated hot spots that may not support the story. As Chris Meade said, "there were a lot of things being trotted out that were nothing more than some illustrations for you to jab." THE LESSON: Make sure the interactivity "does work" for the narrative.

- Static graphics. Worse from a child’s point of view, are items on the screen that look like they should do something, inviting a child’s curious touch, but do not respond. THE LESSON: If you put a balloon in an illustration, make sure a child can pop it.
- Page flippers is a term that came up more than once in the judging, as in “it’s just another page flipper.” It came to stand for old thinking in a new age. Page flippers were very common in this year’s entries. Sometimes they even had their own paper rustling sound. Such a navigation choice is an instant flag that says “not very innovative.” THE LESSON: Think outside the page.
- Free. Free products were treated with a healthy dose of suspicion. We’d ask “what’s the catch?” Some free products act like a spring-loaded snake, ready to jump at you with an offer or a distracting web page. THE LESSON: If you have a “free trial” version, keep the in-app purchases away from young children.
- Noisy. Achieving a psychological balance between screen and child initiation is an art that is instantly violated when sound can’t be controlled. Jurors noted many apps that start like a three-ring circus, throwing out music, sound effects and moving graphics, and removing a child’s ability to control the experience. THE LESSON: Make sure you have a mute button.
- Anonymous. Sometimes it was hard to find out who made the app. THE LESSON: Make the answer to the question “who made this app?” easy to locate.
- Nothing new. Many ebooks blend together into a collective mush of mediocre quality stories with limited features and perhaps a jigsaw puzzle, a coloring page or a game of concentration. There’s so much more the medium can do. THE LESSON: Try to stay a step ahead on the innovation wave. It’s far easier to get noticed.
- No help for the emerging reader. How does the ebook help a child who can’t read? We were impressed by labeling strategies, closed captioning options, and touch and hear techniques to help a child build a bridge (or a scaffold) toward becoming a reader. THE LESSON: Create hooks for success for all developmental levels.

And Now About the Winners

Other jurors might have a different list of winning attributes; these are mine:

- Innovative. Thinks outside the page; ideas haven’t been done before. 2013 Juror André Lietra put it this way: “Imagination and authenticity count for a lot.”
- Narrative. The value of a good story can’t be understated.
- Pulls the child into the story. There are many ways to engage a child in the experience, using the camera, for example.
- Beautiful. Today’s tablets have clear, bright screens that are good vehicles for delivering high quality experiences.
- Technically solid. No bugs, snags, crashes or delivery worries.
- Social. There are opportunities for more than one player to participate, simultaneously.
- Made by a real person. Good apps make it possible to learn more about the people behind the work. (See, for example, *Identikat*.)

- Well crafted. The animation and sounds dance perfectly with the story.
- Text scaffolding. Helps readers of all levels participate with the language by decoding the print. (See *We are Alaska*.)
- Works on various screen sizes. We saw some titles like *The Nutcracker* that were designed with small or large screens in mind.
- Ethical. Priced reasonably, with commercial links and/or prompts for additional content kept behind a firewall to protect children from frustration and wasted playtime.
- Scary. Edgy content must be carefully handled in order to keep things interesting. Titles like *Midnight Feast* let the child choose the amount of “scary sauce” they can add to the story. (See *iPoe* or *Midnight Feast*.)

FAQs about the Prize

Who can enter? This is a free, public, annual contest sponsored and paid for by the Bologna Children’s Book Fair and organized by Children’s Technology Review. Any author or publisher can enter, and there is no entry fee. Only recent products are considered (within the past year).

Who picks the winners? For 2014, the jurors were Warren Buckleitner, Editor, Children’s Technology Review (USA); Chris Meade, Digital Director of if:book, London (UK); Cristina Mussinelli, AIE (Italian Publishers Association) Milan, Italy; and Klaas Verplancke, illustrator, author and lecturer, Brugge, Belgium.

How many products were considered? For the 2014 edition, there were 258 entries from 37 countries. All entries ran on either Android, Kindle or iOS.

How many winners? There were two winners (one fiction, one nonfiction), four mentions (two fiction, two nonfiction) and ten finalists (five fiction, five nonfiction). The winners and mentions were included on a short list (either the top ten or top 20).

2014 Winners and Mentions

Fiction Winner: *Love, The App* by Niño Studio (Argentina). It was easy to love this app—tremendous digital imagination and inventiveness applied to a book that celebrates the textures and trickery of paper, giving life to the poignancy of the story.

Mention *Midnight Feast, Slap Happy Larry* (Australia). Evocative, sinister and strange (fortunately you can turn down the scariness level for younger readers), this is a story to linger over and take into your dreams, full of surprising, changing perspectives.

Mention *Jack and the Beanstalk* by Nosy Crow (UK). Jack’s magic beans spouted a magical app, full of innovative interactive design elements that stretch the medium. Hunt for the Golden Goose, outrun the giant, and mend a broken mirror image, of yourself.

Non-Fiction Winner: *Pierre et Le Loup* (Peter and the Wolf) by Camera Lucida (France) is a well-crafted celebration of crisp music and graphics; raising the bar for mixing storytelling,

information and musical play. This is an extraordinarily well-thought visual mix of motion media, animation, typography and graphic design that is full of surprising extras.

Mention *ABC Actions* by Peapod Labs (USA) Crystal clear images bring language action to life at a child's fingertips; we loved the multiple navigation paths and the ability to dynamically change between the two available languages English and Spanish.

Mention *Double Double* by And Then Story Designers (USA). Straightforward drawings and basic animation based on a simple idea with elegant, funny and intelligent results.

Shortlist (Top 20 for 2014)

Here are the top 20, including winners and mentions, in alphabetical order. Note that comments are min alone and do not reflect the opinions of the jurors.

1. *1000 Adventures* by Dada Company (Spain) employs a creative “touch countdown” meter on each page, which increased engagement and helps children know when it's time to move to the next screen.
2. *Amico Ragnolo* by SmallBytes Digital (USA) is a Spanish language book with excellent illustrations, although the responsivity could be improved.
3. *Byron Barton* by Oceanhouse Media (USA) combines clean graphics with Oceanhouse Media's fantastic text scaffolding.
4. *Disney Animation* by Touch Press (UK) is one of the most breathtaking non-fiction apps of all time. Download this app, if you have room.
5. *Double Double* by And Then Story Designers (USA) shows how to use a multi-touch screen to present a simple idea, in a surprising way.
6. *Droles Animaux* by Goodbye Paper (France) is a wonderfully illustrated, zany app with enough interactivity to bring an element of surprise to the letters.
7. *Easy Studio* by 3 Elles Interactive (France) turns a child into the animator by way of a well-designed set of tutorials and animation tools.
8. *Facciamo (Let's Face It)* by Topipittori Isotype.org Semidigitali (Italy) is a delightful collection of interactive forms that can be mixed and matched to make numerals, faces and relationships. Take note of the way the unveil technique is used to uncover hidden images.
9. *Fun With Colors: The Discovery App* by Bastei Lübbe AG (Germany) brings the primary colors to life through refreshingly unique illustrations. Noteworthy feature: The “color snake” feature that chases your finger, as you scribble.
10. *Gekke Dieren* by Querido Children's Books (Netherlands) lets you mix and match animal parts, and record a sound. The illustrations are particularly strong, and manage to go together, despite coming from very different types of animals.
11. *I Love My Dad* by SnappyAnt Play Limited (Australia) combines delightful illustrations and a meaningful story; though limited interactive design.
12. *This Is My Body* by Urbn: Pockets (Germany) mixes interesting facts with non-page, non-linear, up/down, left/right tab-based navigation format. Noteworthy feature: the bookmarks that signal a different navigation path; and the interactive growth scales, where you get to stretch your foot.
13. *Jack and the Beanstalk* by Nosy Crow (UK) is yet another outstanding fairy tale from Nosy Crow. Noteworthy feature: the interactive mirror puzzle.

14. *Love - The App* by Niño Studio (Argentina) combines a strong story with compelling illustrations. The story has a surprising twist as it reveals itself to you.
15. *Midnight Feast* by Slap Happy Larry (Australia) reminds us all that touch screen storytelling isn't exclusive to the very young.
16. *Petting Zoo* by Fox & Sheep GmbH (Germany) is a textbook example of interactive animation; with visual surprises that morph from screen to screen, challenging the definition of page.
17. *Pierre et Le Loup* (Peter and the Wolf) by Camera Lucida (France) puts visual and auditory quality of the highest calibre at a child's fingertips. In this case, it's a symphony orchestra. Noteworthy feature: The augmented reality exploration of the orchestra.
18. *Red in Bed* by Josh On (USA) is a playful exploration of the primary colors, and the role they play in what a child sees.
19. *Rules of Summer* by We Are Wheelbarrow (Australia) is a huge download, for not a lot of content. But the idea of pinching and pulling out of a picture is unique, landing this app on the finalist list.
20. *Sneak a Snack* by Mario Brodeur/U.n.I Interactive (Canada) is comprised of 3D pages that can be moved or swiped, your choice.

Fanfiction and Fandoms: A Primer, A History

By Jen Donovan, Market Partners International

The Magicians Trilogy author **Lev Grossman** in his 2011 *Time* article summarized the mentality surrounding fanfiction in mainstream culture as “what literature might look like if it were reinvented from scratch after a nuclear apocalypse by a band of brilliant pop-culture junkies trapped in a sealed bunker.” Now don’t get Grossman wrong—he is pro-fanfiction<http://content.time.com/time/arts/article/0,8599,2081784,00.html>, but he also acknowledges that to outsiders, it’s an odd world of what some might call extremists. Despite being considered a niche subculture, fanfiction has been steadily growing in popularity, particularly over the last three years.

Fanfiction is divided into “fandoms,” which are fan groups for movies, TV shows, comics, books, celebrities (called Real Person Fiction or RPF), cartoons, anime, manga, games, or plays. The posts can be long form fiction, short form, drabble (100ish words long) or a one-shot (a standalone chapter). When fans start a story, they can choose to put the characters in a completely different setting in what’s called an Alternate Universe (AU). They can re-characterize a literary figure completely, making them Out of Character (OOC) or introduce a new character of their own to a familiar fandom, known as Original Character (OC). They can choose to honor the fandom’s tradition couplings (Canon) or change it up with a non-canon same-sex couple (Slash). These are just to name a few fanfiction colloquialisms that writers use to describe their stories within the fan communities.

The limitless aspect of these fan rewrites draws in writers and readers. They take something the fandom loves and make it new over and over again. Some of the stories are known for being more sexually explicit, like the **Fifty Shades** series by **E.L. James** (originally a Twilight fanfiction titled **Master of the Universe** on **The Writer’s Coffee Shop**), and for embracing LGBTQ over canon couplings, like **The Draco Trilogy**, which was posted on **Fanfiction.net** by **Cassandra Clare** during her **Harry Potter** fanfiction days. That was before she became known as the author of the popular YA series **The Mortal Instruments**, among other works of hers.

One of the recent trends in fanfiction is fiction written by teens, stated **Wattpad** Head of Content **Ashleigh Gardner**. Peer-to-peer writing is different from traditionally published YA and New Adult content, because “when teens are writing for their peers, we see stories that are far more true to life, and often include themes important to the life of teens today, like the complications of social media and impact of technology on their lives.”

Adults might not easily grasp the popular mobile apps or memes that teens want to read about, because they aren’t part of that culture. For example, popular fandoms among teens right now range from **Minecraft** to the **Kim Kardashian: Hollywood** game to the overnight teen sensation meme **Alex From Target**. “It’s amazing to see how quickly fans react to this, as we had 100s of stories about Alex hours after it started trending on Twitter,” Gardner said. This speed of turnaround would probably be impossible for an adult writing to a teen, because of the slower dissemination of news between generations.

That's a major part of the appeal of the fanfiction community: it's driven by the fandom. The fans run the websites, they write the words, they edit the chapters, and they review the stories. Because it's completely fan-sustained, the content is heavily influenced by what the users want to read or by what they sometimes wish the fandom's creators had done originally.

Fans get to actively participate in the fanfiction world through comments and reviews. The communities are an exchange of ideas, often viewed by both budding and established authors alike as a viable and free forum for feedback on work or as a comfortable place to exercise their writing chops. Most fanfiction websites give readers the option of favoriting a chapter, story, or author. Aside from the occasional flame (a bad review), the community is largely helpful and encouraging. Reviewers can give guesses and hopes for the plot as the serialized chapters are posted, which might possibly help a writer tweak their timeline to better cater to the public's interest. On the Wattpad application, readers can highlight a specific paragraph and link their comment to that section.

According to a *Publishers Weekly* article, Wattpad had 18 million users in 2013, just seven years after it was founded. Those 18 million users were uploading and updating about 64,000 stories daily, or over 23 million fics a year. The Canadian company has 35 million users as of November 2014, 45% of which are 13-18 years old.

Through fanfiction fun, the millennial generation has found a new way of learning. Studies have shown that Wattpad users learn through a connection of three spheres: academic, interests, and peer culture. The users draw on their shared interests to interact with their age peers while creating a product, like a longer form story, that appeals to a wide group and is open to discussion. It is a social as well as educational exercise. Fanfiction is starting to be fostered in classrooms because it encourages students to work on their creative writing instead of only focusing on academic writing. As **Kimberly Karalius** wrote on the educator-run blog **Writing Commons**, "Getting involved in fanfiction is a great way to start building your narrative muscles," which will be a useful skill for students to develop in and out of the classroom.

Sometimes writing exercises evolve into books and, sometimes, into book deals. The *Washington Post* said of fanfiction's popularization in publishing, "What used to be a disregarded copyright nightmare is a new, youth-friendly approach for publishers." The most famous would be authors **E.L. James** and **After** author **Anna Todd**, who re-conceptualized their fics as original pieces for six figure deals on straight-to-paperback books. James' *Twilight* series became three books and Todd's *One Direction RPF* series will end up being four.

Another way for authors to get published without violating copyright is to use **Kindle Worlds**. This **Amazon** fanfiction website lets writers earn royalties for their stories by selling them as ebooks. So that writers could earn money for their fanfiction legally, Amazon licensed the popular **Alloy Entertainment** series **Gossip Girl**, **Pretty Little Liars**, and **Vampire Diaries**, all popular among young adults and adults alike among other "Worlds".

Publishing fanfiction authors isn't about re-conceptualizing popular fanfiction, but about finding new voices. The newer independent publisher **Big Bang Press** was founded on the

premise of taking fanfic writers out of their native habitat, i.e. Archive of Our Own, to write completely original novels with no basis in existing fiction whatsoever. Their fanfiction communities supported the authors' publications through a **Kickstarter** campaign.

The number of works posted on popular website **Archive of Our Own** ("AO3" to those in the know) doubled from 2011 to 2012, jumping from about 120,000 to about 240,000 posts per year. As of October 2014, AO3's website, which has been around for six years, said it has 16,269 fandoms, 412,184 users, and 1,317,795 works. New users can only join through invitation. The waitlist for invitation is over 200 users long, but the line moves quickly and a user will usually receive their invitation to join within 24 hours.

Many authors continue to write fanfiction even after being published. Big Bang Press Editor-in Chief **Morgan Davies** attributes this to the fandom atmosphere. "Writing fanfiction is satisfying in a very different way, that isn't about money but is, again, largely about the community. It is *fun*." Ultimately, it isn't meant to be about getting a book deal. It's about enjoying a hobby with peers while maybe learning to write better along the way.

For all of this and more, please attend The Rise of Fandom: Fanfiction and Engaging with Fan Communities panel at Launch Kids on January 13, 2015.

He Reads, She Reads, Ereads! Understanding the e-reading habits of children aged 2-13

By Kara Liebeskind, PlayCollective

Children have been reading ebooks much longer than there have been mobile devices – the Living Books CD-ROM series dates back to 1992. It was the advent of the e-reader and the tablet, though, that made digital books a growing part of kids’ everyday experiences.

As the penetration of e-reading grew, PlayCollective and Digital Book World set out to get a handle on how and when children ages 2-13, and their parents, were incorporating these new options into their routines. The resulting series of reports, launched in January 2013, has tracked consistent growth in families’ ownership and use of e-reading technologies, even though from the first study children were already voracious consumers of digital books, with over half of all kids e-reading and a whopping 85% of those doing so at least once a week.

The second report, published in January 2014, confirmed the trend, and the current report uses both those findings as benchmarks for change and indicators of emerging trends. The 2015 report is based on the results of a survey conducted in October 2014 with 752 parents of children who e-read. It reveals some consistent patterns, but also some notable shifts in the rapidly evolving world of kids and e-reading.

Since the January 2014 report, e-reading devices have become increasingly accessible and affordable. Tablets continue to reign as the most common digital reading platform for children, but ownership of these devices seems to have, at least temporarily, plateaued. In both 2014 and 2015, 82% of e-reading families reported that their children used a tablet to e-read, at least part of the time. Ownership rates for e-readers have similarly remained stagnant, remaining at 64% from 2014 to 2015. Since many families have both e-readers and tablets, it is important to track all devices on which children read more than once a week; here, while last year e-readers had caught up with tablets, this year tablets once again pulled ahead (82% vs. 76%).

The tablet horse race seems to swing back and forth depending on who has most recently introduced a new device or version. Last year, the Kindle Fire became the tablet most commonly used for e-reading among children, but the new Kindle Fire HD took the throne this year, pushing the original down the list and into a tie with the iPad. However, the iPad Mini is a close second to the Kindle Fire HD, suggesting that Android and Apple devices now seem to be on an even playing field.

As important as it is to note *what* children are using to read ebooks, it is equally essential to understand *how* children are reading ebooks. As the number of e-reading devices per home grows, and so too the percentage of children who own their own devices, sharing among siblings and co-reading with parents has become less common, except among the youngest children.

Preschoolers are also more likely to read the same ebook over and over, both during a single reading session and across multiple uses (74% and 81%, respectively). Anyone with a toddler has experienced the “again, again!” phenomenon, whether with a book, a video, or a game; however, it seems that older children tire more quickly of a particular ebook.

New habits extend, as well, to how parents search for, select and choose among ebooks for their children. This is, obviously, critical insight for any author, producer or publisher.

In digital space, parents remain the primary purchasers, but over the course of our studies parents have become more likely to allow children a say in selecting their reading matter. Even when parents are making the purchase alone, their children’s preferences are their foremost criteria, even more so than last year (57% vs. 53%).

Similarly, parents also use ebooks that their children previously enjoyed to help them choose the next one to purchase. For younger children, parents look for the same author but on a different topic or theme. For the oldest age group, by contrast, parents try to stay consistent with both author and topic. This is not parents’ only influence, though. They also rely on a variety of other sources when making ebook selections, including developer reputation, whether their children already own the print edition, and, of course, price.

Parents of e-reading children seem most comfortable with ebooks priced between \$3.50 and \$9.50. On average, they pay \$8.29 for a children’s ebook, a number that has consistently risen every year. Beyond just this willingness to pay more per title, parents are simply more comfortable with paying for digital content. They will choose full-price ebooks or subscription plans over free versions or library rentals. Indeed, parents are willing to pay more than \$13.00 per month for a subscription, if it comes with unlimited access to the newest titles.

Any discussion of ebooks, particularly regarding their rise in popularity, is incomplete without consideration of the evolving role of print books in children’s lives. Young people still read print books *more often* but they *prefer* reading ebooks, and that may be why digital reading caught up almost completely in the last year. Balancing the equation, parents prefer print books for reading with their children, and they are willing to pay more for a book in this traditional format.

Despite parents’ personal inclinations toward print books, they do not believe that ebooks are any more or less useful and valuable than print books. In fact, parents reported no preference when asked which platform they felt was better for their children’s learning (27% vs. 27%).

Like the blind men and the elephant, the term “ebook” can conjure many different things to mind. There are straight conversions of a print book to digital “ink.” There are books that are primarily text, but with multi-media supplements like images or video. There are enhanced picture books with embedded playful “easter eggs” or interactive elements. Finally, there are titles with games and activities that are more like apps than books. Discussions about the current and future direction of reading often center on these formal features of the ebook, and how they scaffold emerging literacy and support dialogic reading, or by contrast how they distract from the story.

As a result, it is significant that parents reported a rise this year in their willingness to pay for ebooks that have enhanced features (35% compared to 27% in 2014). It may be that parents believe the value of ebooks to be in their unique and engaging features and affordances, and that without such features they would prefer to purchase the books in print.

Next to the long and storied history of the print book, the ebook is still in early infancy, and that is what makes it so fascinating to study. In the coming years, the content and context of e-reading are certain to evolve greatly. Engineers will invent new technologies, and content creators will imagine innovative presentations. Whole genres of literature designed expressly for e-reading will emerge, and families will discover new ways to share a love of reading. Academic researchers will discover how these new options influence growth and learning, and market researchers will uncover new ways of matching readers with texts and technologies they will love. It is truly an exciting world for reading, and PlayCollective is thrilled and honored to be exploring it!

Kara Liebeskind is Research Manager at PlayCollective, the insights, design and strategy group that conducted all the Digital Book World studies. She received her Ph.D. in 2013 from the University of Pennsylvania Annenberg School for Communication. She completed her undergraduate work at Georgetown University where she received a B.A. in Psychology with a focus on Child Development. In all of her research, she has tried to explore the aspects of children's media that maximizes learning in an effort to enhance the educational value of the media. She is particularly interested in examining the role of parents and the efficacy of applying media research in the classroom.