

# Books, Media & the Internet

Children's Literature  
for Today's Classrooms

edited by  
Shelley S. Peterson,  
David Booth & Carol Jupiter



PORTAGE & MAIN PRESS

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# Contents

	Foreword	<i>vii</i>
	<i>Shelley Stagg Peterson, David Booth, Carol Jupiter</i>	
<b>Section One</b>	<b>Reading Words and Images in Print and on Screen</b>	<b>1</b>
Chapter 1.	Literature in a New Era: Porous, Hybrid, Slippery, and Unfinished	3
	<i>Margaret Mackey</i>	
Chapter 2.	Airheads, Brand Names, and the Lit. in Literacy	11
	<i>Deirdre Baker</i>	
<b>Section Two</b>	<b>Engaging with Texts in Print and on Screen</b>	<b>21</b>
Chapter 3.	Debugging Texts with Metacognition	23
	<i>Carol Jupiter</i>	
Chapter 4.	Power Up Picture Books	37
	<i>Kristin Main</i>	
Chapter 5.	Scaffolding Early Literacy Using the SMART Board	47
	<i>Brenda Stein Dzaldov and Elana Shapiro Davidson</i>	
<b>Section Three</b>	<b>Writing Our Way into Literature Using Multimedia and Digital Technology</b>	<b>57</b>
Chapter 6.	Being, Becoming, and Belonging: An Integrated Literacy Approach	59
	<i>Miriam Davidson and Mary Ladky</i>	
Chapter 7.	Art-Full Journals: Making Multimodal Connections	71
	<i>Jane Baskwill</i>	
Chapter 8.	Cyberwriters: Bringing Historical Fiction into the World of New Literacies	87
	<i>Jeanette Thompson</i>	

<b>Chapter 9.</b>	Developing Agency and Voice: Radically Rewritten Traditional Tales <i>Heather Lotherington</i>	97
<b>Section Four</b>	<b>Critical Reading of Print and Non-Print Texts</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>Chapter 10.</b>	Using Traditional and Multimodal Texts to Promote Multicultural Literacy and Intercultural Connections <i>Jamie Campbell Naidoo</i>	109
<b>Chapter 11.</b>	The Lion, the Witch, and the Cereal Box: Reading Children’s Literature across Multimedia Franchises <i>Naomi Hamer</i>	121
<b>Chapter 12.</b>	Toyttexts: Critically Reading Children’s Playthings <i>Linda Cameron and Kimberly Bezaire</i>	137
<b>Section Five</b>	<b>Libraries: Literature and the Internet</b>	<b>151</b>
<b>Chapter 13.</b>	What Are All the Computers Doing in the Public Library? <i>Ken Settington</i>	153
<b>Chapter 14.</b>	Rare Books in the Classroom: Interactive Programs and Digital Collections of Historical Children’s Books <i>Leslie McGrath</i>	163
<b>Section Six</b>	<b>Afterword</b>	<b>175</b>
<b>Chapter 15.</b>	Children’s Literature and the New Literacies: What about assessment? <i>Shelley Stagg Peterson</i>	177
<b>Chapter 16.</b>	Read Me a Story, but Plug It in First <i>David Booth</i>	183
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>Teaching Tools</b>	<b>189</b>
	Getting to Know the Technology <i>Kristin Main</i>	191
	Using Microsoft Photo Story 3 <i>Shirley Sinclair</i>	195
	Contributors	205

## Foreword

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**W**e are people of the book. But we do not wear blinkers. We are attuned to and, on a daily basis, employ the technological tools at our fingertips; for example, this book was written, revised, and edited using word-processing software on our computers. Email enabled us to communicate with our participating authors, our publisher, and each other. Truly, it saved us time and energy. Yet, despite these benefits, we often turn to books and appreciate the permanency of print on the page.

Our attachment to story and words may, in part, account for our love of books. It is hard to imagine reading a bedtime story to a child from a computer screen. We prefer the image of a child cuddled up with a parent, pointing to pictures, touching the page, and turning the pages back and forth to explore the illustrations in the book. But at some later point in time, that same child might take great delight in reading that book and others on screen, using a mouse to turn the pages, or listening to a voice emanating from the computer speakers reading the story. Behold the intersection of text and screen.

This interaction continues as we consider that the computer is often our default dictionary and encyclopedia, whether we're reading text on screen or on the printed page. The two formats work together as cross-references that inform and lead us to other books, more websites, and other media. In fact, *google* has taken pride of place as both noun and verb in everyday parlance.

Despite this electronic dominance and despite the predictions of many pundits, we see that books, magazines, and newspapers have not yet disappeared. We wonder why there are more books sold today at a time when there is an explosion of electronic texts. Why hasn't the world gone paperless? What is it about the iconic and ironic quality of the printed page that accounts for the continued existence of books in our wired world? We understand there is something unique about a book—sheets of paper printed with words and bound together—that somehow meets the mystical need to hold, carry, and commune with the text at one's own pace. These experiences are not far removed from first writing, the moment of pride when a child puts

their first marks on paper and declares it a story. These are elemental events that mark our personal history. Would these be the same if confined to a simulated paper page on a computer?

While we ponder the role of technology in our literate lives, there are children throughout the world who clamour for books. In Margriet Ruurs's book *My Librarian Is a Camel: How Books Are Brought to Children around the World*, the book is a rare and expensive artefact. She regales us with tales of the ingenuity, the energy, and the lengths to which people have gone to deliver books into the welcoming arms of eager readers. Books come by camel, elephant, bicycle, and riverboat to remote communities where readers of all ages rush forth to gather up these treasures. We conjure up a picture that is in stark contrast to our own experience where books surround us in libraries and bookstores—there are volumes stacked on every available surface in many homes. Many of us adults could not imagine a life where books were not easily at hand.

Yet, in the world outside classrooms, books are losing their prominence in the lives of young people. After all, our students are comfortable in a texting, chatting, googling realm. Many young people appear to live life on screen. In fact, wireless libraries abound as universities put entire libraries on line. Hundreds of thousands of books are now a mere finger tap away. Our students no longer need to read *books*, that is, the artifacts.

But, like many educators and authors, we believe there is a place in today's classrooms for both literacies—reading the new digital and multimedia texts *and* reading traditional paper-based forms (books, magazines, and newspapers). We recognize that the worlds of paper and screen are not mutually exclusive, which is the thinking that led us to develop this book. Knowing that this reality was being addressed in classrooms around the globe, we invited prominent educators and researchers from two continents to present their research on children's literature in its many forms and guises at our conference called "A Place for Children's and Young Adult Literature in New Literacies Classrooms," held in Toronto, Ontario, in April 2008. The teaching ideas and stories presented then have been reworked for this book—they come from classrooms in Australia, Canada, and the United States.

Within the covers of this book, we have broken through the barricade that traditionally positioned reading teachers in one of two camps—text on screen versus text printed on paper. We show that, in children's lives, there are no walls between printed texts and on-screen texts. It's not a matter of one type of text making another obsolete; instead, students find that each type of text offers something that the other cannot. Digital and media texts should be used hand in hand with printed texts, not supplant them. As enthusiastic readers of children's literature in print, we have placed, and will continue to place, children's literature at the forefront of our teaching. Yet, we are also excited about the endless possibilities offered by media and digital texts.

This book "speaks" not only to the technologically capable and media-savvy teachers but also to those who are curious, who seek starting points to

use technology and media *along with* the books in their classrooms. This book provides information, classroom examples, and anecdotes as practical tools to help teachers use digital, media, and print texts to extend students' learning.

### The contributors

We have selected the work of the following authors to explore the nuances and the pitfalls of the myriad text forms that might fill our children's lives.

In Section One, "Reading Words and Images in Print and on Screen," we bring together two authorities on children's literature to present different views on texts for children. Margaret Mackey, professor of Library and Information Sciences at the University of Alberta, offers us a new vision of literature, contrasting the permanence of print with the ephemeral, slippery nature of electronic and hybrid texts. Deirdre Baker, professor of English at the University of Toronto, is a leading and widely read reviewer of children's literature. She writes about critically examining the influence of a consumer-driven society as reflected in young adult literature. Because a book is frozen in time, it lets us reflect on the ideas and frees us from what Ron Jobe calls "the web of immediacy." We bring these two thinkers together to highlight our vision of children's literature in the contemporary world. How will we as stewards of children's reading lives guide our children to an understanding of the new modes of meaning making? These two chapters reflect the contemporary issues facing all of us in today's electronic-media-saturated and book-filled environment. Mass media, readily manipulated and widely available digital texts, and books in both print form and on hand-held electronic readers testify to the complexity of children's literature at home and at school.

In Section Two "Engaging with Texts in Print and on Screen," Carol Jupiter, Kristin Main, Brenda Stein Dzaldov and Elana Shapiro Davidson present opportunities for involving young people in responding to and creating texts. In "Debugging Texts with Metacognition," Carol Jupiter reminds us that we can nudge children's comprehension of any text through mindful interactive questioning and teachers' think-alouds. She offers a checklist for assessing the literacy strategies that students use when making meaning with websites and literature. In "Power Up Picture Books," Kristin Main uses electronic game methodology to manipulate electronic images of picture book illustrations when interpreting and recreating meaning in intermediate classrooms. Similarly, in their chapter "Scaffolding Early Literacy Using the SMART Board," Brenda Stein Dzaldov and Elana Shapiro Davidson incorporate the technology of the SMART Board into the framework of a balanced literacy program for primary classrooms. In "Teaching Tools" at the end of this book, Kristin explains how to use a variety of digital tools in the classroom.

The authors in Section Three, "Writing Our Way into Literature Using Multimedia and Digital Technology," connect children's writing of media and digital texts to their reading of literature and other text forms.

In “Being, Becoming, and Belonging: An Integrated Literacy Approach,” Miriam Davidson and Mary Ladky describe a project in an intermediate classroom where students use photography and a selection of literary texts to help students find their voices through poetry writing. Jane Baskwill, in “Art-Full Journals: Making Multimodal Connections,” describes a project where students using digital and multimedia texts respond to media and print text sets, and connect to text through their own life experiences and through the arts (e.g., collage, drama and dance). Jen Thompson, in “Cyberwriters: Bringing Historical Fiction into the World of New Literacies,” describes a writing project where young writers create historical fictional narratives using digital images, sounds, and words. In *Teaching Tools*, Jen Thompson’s colleague, Shirley Sinclair, presents a recipe for creating photo stories. Heather Lotherington, in “Developing Agency and Voice: Radically Rewritten Traditional Tales,” explores the possibilities for digitally retelling traditional fairy tales, folk stories, and fables by transforming them into individually published booklets, iMovies, and video games.

In Section Four, “Critical Reading of Print and Non-Print Texts,” the authors move us into the social and cultural underpinnings of reading multicultural and intercultural books and media, as well as books that become media and toy texts. In Jamie Naidoo’s chapter, “Using Traditional and Multimodal Texts to Promote Multicultural Literacy and Intercultural Connections,” he uses international literature in different forms to deepen understanding between cultures. Naomi Hamer’s chapter, “The Lion, the Witch, and the Cereal Box: Reading Children’s Literature across Multimedia Franchises,” highlights the cross-marketing of books, film, TV, music albums, video games, and clothing and provides forums for in-class reflection and discussion. Linda Cameron and Kimberly Bezaire’s chapter, “Toyttexts: Critically Reading Children’s Playthings,” looks at the role of toyttexts derived from the media (television shows, video games, websites) that are marketed to children through a web of interrelated texts. The authors raise awareness of the behaviours and attitudes that arise as children are being manipulated without critical understanding.

In Section Five, “Libraries: Literature and the Internet,” Ken Settingington and Leslie McGrath write about the technological resources of public libraries. Ken Settingington’s chapter is a report on the new face of the public library where technology lives alongside print resources in providing our students with educational experiences beyond the classroom. Leslie McGrath introduces us to webquests and self-contained web-based programs that provide a free multidisciplinary resource for classrooms in her chapter “Rare Books in the Classroom! Interactive Programs and Digital Collections of Historical Children’s Books.”

In the “Afterword,” Shelley Stagg Peterson writes about the challenge of assessing students’ growth as literacy learners. David Booth concludes with a reflective essay, drawing together the modes of children’s literature past and present.

### A final word

We trust that you, the reader, will review and cogitate on all the text forms that engage our children and find your own ways of accommodating the varied shapes, sizes, and materials of children's literature so that each child will be able to know the solitude of a book, the excitement of an online inquiry, the involvement of hearing an author speak aloud on a webcast, the discovery of writings from around the world and, like our authors, declare themselves a lover of all texts.

*Shelley Stagg Peterson*  
*David Booth*  
*Carol Jupiter*  
—JULY 2009

## Contributors

**DEIRDRE BAKER** has taught children's literature at various universities in Canada and the USA and is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at the University of Toronto. She is co-author with Ken Setterington of *A Guide to Canadian Children's Books* (McClelland & Stewart 2003) and author of the children's novel *Becca at Sea* (Groundwood Books 2007), which was a Horn Book Fanfare selection for 2007 and named among the top ten children's books of the year. Deirdre Baker has been the children's book reviewer for the *Toronto Star* since 1998, and she writes and reviews regularly for *Quill & Quire* and *The Horn Book Journal*.

When **JANE BASKWILL** was a child, her parents allowed her to write on one wall of her bedroom. It was in this space that she published, in words and pictures, her first stories and launched her writing self. Now, as a teacher educator at Mount Saint Vincent University, she brings the arts, children's literature, and her interest in new media and new literacies to her work with teachers and administrators. She is intrigued and excited by the possibilities that the merger of old and new technologies affords our teaching and learning.

**KIMBERLY BEZAIRE** is an Early Childhood Education specialist and doctoral candidate at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. Her research and writing interests include children's classroom play, multiliteracies, and the children's toy market. Having taught in early years settings, as a teacher educator, she consults on projects relating to kindergarten and the arts in early childhood. Kimberly enjoys bike riding, playing and googling on the computer with her eight-year-old son.

From his beginnings as a reader at the public library in Sarnia, **DAVID BOOTH** has spent his life among books for children and young adults — as a teacher reading them aloud, as a consultant bringing them to schools, as a professor talking about their strengths and possibilities, as a parent sharing them with his son, and as a writer telling stories and finding poems that kids will enjoy. He continues his passion for children’s literature by writing about texts in all their forms, and by buying books to read to his granddaughter.

Oh, the stories that **LINDA CAMERON** composed as a child when romping through the forest, daydreaming by a brook, or teaching all the naughty scholars in her pretend classroom! Toys were texts full of meaning and potential. Now, media expand the possibilities by opening up new worlds and inquiries, answering many questions but inviting more, and connecting us. Wow! As a teacher of every age, a parent of three, a teacher educator, and a researcher, Linda is thankful that she has been able to play with the many kinds of text and with play partners, here and around the world, who have helped develop her stories and ideas.

**ELANA SHAPIRO DAVIDSON**, who completed her **MED** at OISE, University of Toronto, has taught for ten years in primary classrooms. She enjoys watching her students experience stories on paper as well as interacting with text on screen. Elana secretly dreams of one day having a **SMART** Board mounted on her kitchen wall, and her greatest joy is telling her two children “Lights out” but allowing them to stay up just five more minutes because they are curled up in bed reading books in print and onscreen!

**MIRIAM DAVIDSON** is Assistant Professor and Coordinator of Integrated Arts at Trent University in Ontario. Her research focuses on the role of the arts in enhancing student engagement in learning, the connection between the production of visual imagery (photography in particular) and student literacy, and the artistic practices and traditions in non-formal, community-based settings. Her qualitative studies bring underserved communities of learners together with pre-service teachers and artists through arts enrichment outreach and service learning projects.

**BRENDA STEIN DZALDOV** is in the third year of a **PHD** program at OISE/UT. She is a teacher and literacy consultant, specializing in the areas of Reading Recovery™, ESL, and Special Education. Brenda has written levelled children’s literature for classroom reading instruction and published professional articles, both locally and internationally, with a specific focus on text and new literacies. She is the mother of three children — Jenny, Mitchell, and Benji — with whom she has experienced and loved a wide range of children’s literature over the past 14 years.

**NAOMI HAMER** is a PHD candidate at the Centre for Children, Youth and Media at the Institute of Education, University of London, UK. She has an MA in Children's Literature from the University of British Columbia, and has worked extensively as a drama and creative arts instructor in schools, libraries, and recreational centres. Her recent focus is on the development of programs for young people that use digital technologies to engage with children's literature.

**CAROL JUPITER** is a classroom teacher in Toronto, Ontario. Her love of books, words, and writing began when her mother took Carol on weekly ventures to a tiny library a long time ago. Today she shares this love with her family, friends, and students. In this realm she has the time and opportunity to delve into text and the magic of reading.

**MARY LADKY** currently teaches at Trent University's School of Education and Professional Learning. Her teaching and research areas include secondary English studies, sociocultural perspectives on the teaching of English, and supporting special-needs learners. Before obtaining her doctorate, Dr. Ladky taught English and literature studies in Beijing, Hong Kong, Montreal, and New York. She is married to the Canadian author, Charles Foran, and they live with their two daughters — and a proliferating collection of books for young and old — in Peterborough, Ontario.

**HEATHER LOTHERINGTON** teaches in Education and Linguistics at York University in Toronto. She has been involved in researching multiliteracies at Joyce Public School in northwest Toronto since 2003, when she spent a sabbatical year at Joyce observing classes, volunteering as an ESL assistant, and reading stories to kindergarten children. Since then, she has worked actively and continuously both with the teachers to design multiliteracy pedagogies that include digital media, contemporary genres, and community languages in emergent literacy education for urban, multicultural children, and with the principal to create a learning community that facilitates research-based professional development.

**MARGARET MACKEY** is a professor in the School of Library and Information Studies at the University of Alberta. She teaches and researches in the area of multimodal and print literacies, and also teaches young adult literature. Her most recent book is *Mapping Recreational Literacies: Contemporary Adults at Play* (Lang 2007), and she has published numerous articles on the breathtaking changes in the literate behaviours and tastes of contemporary young people.

**LESLIE MCGRATH** studied at the University of Toronto, completing an MLS degree in 1984 and, in 2005, a PHD in Information Studies, a collaborative program in book history and print culture. She has been with the Toronto Public Library as head of the Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books since 1995.

**KRISTIN MAIN**, a former secondary school English teacher with Lakehead District School Board in Northwestern Ontario, was amazed by the technological abilities of students. She was even more amazed by their abilities to adapt to and develop with the ever-changing face of the digital world. It was because of them that she returned to her own studies, enrolling as a doctoral candidate at OISE, University of Toronto, where she is currently investigating ways to learn from the students' experiences and connect them with the realities of being socially aware consumers and producers of varied texts.

**JAMIE CAMPBELL NAIDOO** is an Endowed Assistant Professor at the University of Alabama's School of Library and Information Studies. He has served on numerous national (American) and international book awards committees, including the Caldecott. When he is not teaching and researching in the areas of diversity in libraries and children's literature, Jamie spends his time restoring his 1940s bungalow and enjoying a good cup of coffee with his fearless Siamese, Kiki.

**SHELLEY STAGG PETERSON** is an associate professor at OISE, University of Toronto. Her research and teaching in writing, writing assessment, and children's literature are grounded in eight years of teaching in elementary schools in rural Alberta. In 2001, she founded the Toronto Reading Council, which sponsored the "Place for Children's Literature in New Literacies Classrooms" conference. She is returning to her rural roots in her research, asking questions about teaching literacy in isolated rural communities, and enjoying country life in eastern Ontario with her husband and cat every weekend, come rain, snow, or sunshine.

**KEN SETTERINGTON** is a librarian, storyteller, author, and reviewer. He is the Children and Youth Advocate for Library Services at the Toronto Public Library. In 2000, he was named the Librarian of the Year by the Ontario Library Association. He co-wrote *A Guide to Canadian Children's Books in English* (McClelland & Stewart 2003) with Deirdre Baker. Ken is an acknowledged expert on children's and teen literature and has served on award committees for the TD Canadian Children's Literature Award, the Newbery Medal, and the Caldecott Medal. He can be heard on CBC Radio discussing the best new books for children as a member of the Children's Book Panel.

**SHIRLEY SINCLAIR** has lectured in Information and Communication Technologies for seven years in the School of Education at Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga, New South Wales, Australia. Prior to this appointment she was a teacher-librarian and computer coordinator at a primary school in Wagga Wagga.

**JEANETTE THOMPSON** once made Polkaroo fly over the CN Tower on Imagination Day. She also wrote scripts for Polka Dot Shorts, Mr. Dressup, and Playschool before returning to Australia to teach as a Reading Recovery™ specialist. Currently, she lectures in multiliteracies and children's literature in the School of Education, Charles Sturt University. She hopes to encourage her pre-service teachers, and their students, to fly with digital texts. Cyberwriters are the authors of the future.