

## **Children's E-books are Born: How E-books for Children are Leading E-book Development and Redefining the Reading Experience**

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### ***Abstract***

Children's e-books waited to emerge until technology could support their advanced requirements. Recent technologies such as colour e-readers and tablets like Apple's iPad provide support for heavy visual content and opportunities for interactivity. E-books for children have grown in availability and popularity and now include puzzles, games, music, video, and audio features that boost narratives and create a unique reading experience that is further from print than ever before. This article positions e-books for children as leaders in e-book development. It reviews concepts, practices, and scholarship in the area of e-books for children and highlights issues with definitions and research caused by the rapid growth of enhanced and interactive e-books. There is little argument among scholars and practitioners that the reading experience is changing, and the new generation of readers may have different opinions, assumptions, and preferences for the meanings of 'book' and 'reading'. Managing these shifts in the reading experience, which is still strongly tied to notions from print culture, is an important role for LIS scholars, librarians, educators, and parents. Recent research on e-books for children focuses largely on literacy and education. Little attention has been paid to if and why children enjoy the e-reading experience. Additionally, the majority of current research examines children's e-reading from an adult perspective with most surveys and interviews consulting parent participants and not children. An examination of relevant research as well as literature on the history and conceptualization of e-books and reading as an evolving experience reveals that, from new technologies to new experiences and new definitions, e-books for children are pushing toward the future of reading.

### ***Keywords***

e-book; e-books for children; interactive e-book; enhanced e-book; e-reading

## **Introduction**

*“E-books are awesome.” – 13 year-old girl, Michigan (Scholastic 6)*

E-books for children are long overdue. They were expected with great anticipation as technology developers, publishers, booksellers, content creators, libraries, and readers prepared for their arrival. Now in their infancy, e-books for children struggle to find a place in the world; they require the most up-to-date technology, illustrate the most recent trends, push the envelope of reading software, and redefine the reading experience. In this way, e-books for children are prominent in the development of all e-books and in the growing culture surrounding the e-reading experience. Impressively, they have achieved this level of influence in a very short amount of time. Children’s e-books waited to emerge until technology could support their advanced requirements, and since recent technologies such as colour e-readers and tablets like Apple’s iPad now provide support for heavy visual content and opportunities for interactivity, e-books for children are blossoming. An examination of the history, literature and current trends in e-books for children reveals their importance in the evolution of e-books as well as ways to improve studies by including the experiences of children reading e-books.

Studies on the reading habits of children show a recent increase in children reading e-books. According to the Scholastic 2012 biannual study *Kids & Family Reading Report 4<sup>th</sup> edition*, 46% of children have read an e-book. That is almost twice as much as in 2010 (25%) (Scholastic 2). A similar study conducted by Digital Book World and PlayScience entitled *The ABCs of Kids & E-books: Understanding the E-Reading Habits of Children Aged 2-13* found that 54% of parents said that their kids aged 2-13 read e-books, with 85% reading e-books at least once a week. The study also found that children e-read on tablets more than any other device, with 31% of all children reading e-books on a tablet (Greenfield par. 12). This is indicative of the trend toward the types of interactivity and enhancements supported by tablets. Puzzles, games, music, video, and audio are now features that boost the narrative of e-books and create a unique reading experience that is further from print than ever before. In response, many disciplines including Library and Information Science (LIS) are re-examining common beliefs formed by print culture and the changes enabled by advancing technology in an attempt to understand the rapidly transforming reading experience.

The LIS literature and other relevant research on e-books for children are limited. This is due, in part, to the fact that it is a new phenomenon, and there has not been time to explore the emerging behaviors and trends in detail. Further, the research that does exist focuses largely on literacy and education. Little attention has been paid to if and why children enjoy the e-reading experience. Compounding these gaps in literature is the fact that the majority of current research examines children e-reading from an adult perspective, with most surveys and interviews consulting parent participants and not children. This limited perspective is problematic as ingrained notions from print culture govern many adults’ understanding of the reading experience. This is clearly illustrated in the practice of co-reading and the nostalgia surrounding reading with children. An examination of recent studies as well as literature on the history and conceptualization

of e-books reveals that, from new technologies to new experiences and new definitions, e-books for children are pushing toward the future of reading.

## ***The Conception of Children's E-books: Definitions, History, and Categorization***

*"It's cool to read on an e-reader." – 11 year-old boy, New Jersey (Scholastic 6)*

In the short history of e-books, and even shorter history of e-books for children, the opportunities afforded digital content by ever-advancing technology has disrupted definitions and commonly held assumptions about reading. LIS professionals and researchers work to create categories, differentiate between types of e-books, and provide insight into developing media. While this work is not always exclusive to e-books for children, it is important to note that, through their growth, children's e-books have spurred the changes and propelled the research discussed here.

### **Definitions and History**

In the short years since their inception, e-books for children have contributed to the changes in the definition of 'e-book' by popularizing multimedia features and interactivity, supporting the notion that "the changing definition of the e-book throughout the years can be attributed to market trends" (Manley and Holley 293). Current definitions of 'e-book' include any digital object with textual and/or other content which arises as a result of integrating the familiar concept of a print codex with features that can be provided in an electronic environment. E-books may have in-use features such as search and cross reference functions, hypertext links, bookmarks, annotations, highlights, multimedia objects and interactive tools (Vasileiou and Rowley 356). Many of the changes that led to this new definition were driven, especially in recent years, by children's e-books despite e-books for children being fresh to the market. The literature on the development of e-books reveals possible explanations for their delayed arrival, such as the limitations of e-readers and the academic nature of the first e-books and digital libraries. It also details the development of features such as hypertext as the first form of interactivity, and mobile devices, which vastly contribute to the current experience of e-books for children.

E-books started, and were for the majority of their history, firmly in the realm of academics: "[t]he idea for an electronic book was first presented to the scientific community in Vannevar Bush's essay 'As We May Think' (1945)" (Manley and Holley 294). In his article, Bush describes his theory that information leaves trails and that one document could lead to information in another. He also thought that a personal device in which the researcher could store information would make the job of the researcher easier (Manley and Holley 294). While the device described in Bush's "As We May Think" was never built, his efforts motivated the work of Alan Kay who envisioned a 'dynabook', a small portable device for reading, in 1968 (Kay, 2003) and created the world's first portable computer (Manley and Holley 294). It also inspired the work of Douglas Englebart and Ted Nelson who developed Bush's notion of information trails

into what we know today as hypertext (Manley and Holley 294).

Early children's e-book history includes CD ROM storybooks, many of which had the interactive features such as audio and dictionary functions embedded into the text. In CD ROM books "a mouse-based interface permits children to 'turn the pages' and select titles from a menu" (Talley, Lancy and Lee, 1997). Studies revealing the benefits and disadvantages of electronic texts, especially for the purposes of instruction, began with CD ROM storybooks (Chu, 1995; Leu, 1997). While these studies show that electronic texts can aid in self-reliance when learning to read reading, others such as Lewin (1996) argue that children may become too reliant on the special features. Although replaced by more mobile technology, CD ROM children's books sparked the integration of interactive features that continue to develop in e-books for children.

Digital libraries arose in response to demand for easy and fast access. Again, the first of these were academic, such as Project Gutenberg launched in 1971 (Manley and Holley 293). The first library with children's materials came much later; Hane states that in March 1999, NetLibrary, now World Public Library, launched an electronic library and sold subscriptions to more than 40 libraries and five major library consortia with 24/7 access to e-books including some children's titles (Hane 4). Despite these libraries and others that were born in the last decade, children's e-books were not a large part of the e-book market until after 2010. In fact, categories like 'Children' and 'Young Adult' were not included in the Association of American Publishers (AAP) reports on e-books until 2012 (Greenfield par. 10). According to the AAP reports, children's e-books are now a faster growing share of the publishing market than adult e-books: growth numbers for children's e-books are strong at 196% to \$177 million compared to adult e-books which went up only 37% for 2012 to \$858 million (Greenfield, par. 12). Much of this growth occurred at the beginning of 2012 "when children's e-books saw monthly growth rates of 475.1% in January and 177.8% in February" (Greenfield par. 18). While it may appear drastic, "the explosive growth in children's e-books is completely expected" (Hall 3) and is a result of technological advances designed specifically to accommodate them, such as publishing formats that allow flowable text, illustrations, large text, and the specific layouts found in children's books.

### **Categorizing E-books for Children**

E-books for children garner attention from many academic fields such as education, human computer interaction, and media studies. One of the ways that LIS research positions itself in relation to children's e-books is to help classify and differentiate the many emerging types. For example, Barker organizes e-books into ten basic types, three of which apply to children's e-books: picture books, audio books, and multimedia books. Barker's other categories include multimedia books and hypermedia books (Barker 3) which, given recent developments in technology, can also apply to e-books for children. To provide more clarity, Bartolome outlines the differentiation between multimedia and hypermedia e-books: in multimedia books the information in multiple forms is organized linearly whereas in hypermedia information is divided into chunks that are then linked (Shiratuddin and Landoni 75).

The bulk of this categorization work was done over a decade ago in the early gestational period of e-books, before they gained popularity, and well before children's e-books made an impact on the market, publishing, and the reading practices of children. While not usually applied today, these categories highlight the changes in technology and the evolution of 'e-book'. Current categorizations of e-books for children include 'basic' or 'enhanced' with the designation of 'interactive' (Itzkovitch par. 2) sometimes used to further describe enhanced features.

Basic e-books were the first to appear on designated e-readers such as the Kindle, Nook, and Kobo and have limited or no interactive features. Readers are able to flip the pages, search for content, or highlight words to see a dictionary definition, and the devices allow simple customization such as font size and style. These books are often digital facsimiles of print books or are composed to offer a similar-to-print reading experience. Because of their relative simplicity, they are available across multiple platforms such as designated e-readers, laptop or desktop computers, tablets, and mobile phones.

'Enhanced e-books' are newly designated, and their definition is still ambiguous. Simply put, an enhanced e-book is an e-book that includes more than just the text and illustrations from the print or basic e-book (Koeshier 1). More precise definitions describe enhanced e-books as a further evolution of basic e-books: "a new digital publication standard that allows easy integration of video, audio, and interactivity" (Itzkovitch 2). However, some publishers choose to define 'enhanced' as including reader's guides or author interviews. While these additional elements might enhance the e-book and be of value to readers, they are "hardly revolutionary in that similar materials have been added to paperbacks for decades" (Koeshier 1) and therefore debatably do not belong in the category of 'enhanced'. Other materials in enhanced e-books include puzzles, quizzes and games, and audio and video materials such as radio and newsreel or television recordings (Wasserek 10). Therefore, according the current definitions, enhanced e-books may offer interactive features, but the term does not imply that all enhanced features need be interactive. Because of this ambiguousness, the category of 'interactive e-books' was developed.

Interactive e-books is a category for apps designed specifically to "utilize the powers of tablets to enable users to interact with the storyline in sight, sound, and touch" (Itzkovitch par.6). These e-books aim to provide users with a reading experience that goes beyond, or is different from, what they can find in print. In the literature surrounding interactive e-books, the 'reader' is often transformed into the 'user'. This shift in language mirrors the shift from e-books as static files to apps that engage user interfaces. Therefore, 'interactivity' is the ability to engage with the user interface, including the ways the users move their fingers on the screen, the way they select applications, or how they browse the Web (Itzkovitch par. 6).

## ***Growing Pains: Industry Research and the Issues of Interactivity***

*“You can tap on a word to see what it means and you can make the words big or small.”  
– 9 year-old girl, Virginia (Scholastic 17)*

As they emerge from gestation, e-books for children provoke a number of issues for researchers, library professionals, and both child and adult readers, such as inadequate studies and the challenges brought on by the fast-paced progress of interactivity.

### **Industry Research**

Many of the studies conducted on children’s use of e-books come from industry research. Recent studies include Scholastic’s 2012 *Kids & Family Reading Report 4<sup>th</sup> edition*, Digital Book World and PlayScience’s 2012 *The ABCs of Kids & E-books: Understanding the E-Reading Habits of Children Aged 2-13*, or the 2012 Quckreports conducted at the Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop such as *Comparing parent-child co-reading on print, basic, and enhanced e-book platforms: A Cooney Center QuickReport*, *QuickReport: Print Books vs E-books*, and *QuickReport: Parent Co-Reading Survey*. These studies are very influential in popular media and provide good information about trends in e-books for children, especially in regards to literacy. The problems they pose rest in the fact that they expose limited aspects of the e-reading experience, portray narrow perspectives, and are open to uninformed interpretation. More and better research is needed to fully understand the spectrum of opinions, concepts, and issues involved in e-books for children.

Perspectives portrayed by these studies are primarily adult, with most surveying only adults (parents); however, the national Scholastic study surveys adults and children age 6-17. Otherwise, when interviews are conducted with children, such as in the *QuickReport: Print Books vs E-books*, interviewers ask the children questions only to assess their comprehension of the story. From an LIS perspective the child’s enjoyment of the story and the experience of the medium are also relevant topics for study.

While studies about literacy issues and e-books are necessary, it is problematic when industry research that reaches a large audience has a very limited scope. For example, the results of the Cooney Center’s studies summarize many issues with e-books and literacy, stating that children’s reading comprehension between print books and regular e-books was about the same; however, children who read enhanced e-books remembered “significantly fewer narrative details than children who read the print version of the same story” (Chiong et al. 2). They attribute this to the fact that “both types of e-books, but especially the enhanced e-book, prompted more non-content related actions (e.g., behavior or device focused talk, pushing hands away) from children and parents than the print books” (Chiong et al. 1). A simple Google search of phrases like ‘children and e-books’ returns a high number of articles that cite these findings under titles that summarily dismiss and condemn children’s e-books. Scholars and practitioners note that this is problematic. For example, Harris points out that the Cooney Center’s definition of noncontent-related activities as seen in the data summary

includes only categories that would be found in digital books: “[p]arent [or child] talks about book features” and “[p]arent [or child] hotspots” (12). Providing a glimpse into larger issues with the established print culture and readers’ expectations, Harris goes on to discuss why it is any wonder that neither parents nor children overlooked the so-called features of the print books they are familiar with and noticed the differences in the electronic versions.

The alarming increase in noncontent-related activities that the Cooney Center misleadingly highlights in their opening graph is almost entirely attributable to children interacting with the content-related hotspots in the enhanced e-book version that are obviously not present in the print version. This is not a failure; this is the intended and indeed desired result of providing enhancements to a digital book. This is not... a case of children and parents regressing to pushing and shoving, in fact there were no real negative behaviors in either print or electronic reading scenarios (Harris 14).

### **Too Much Interactivity?**

Another issue surrounds the extent to which interactivity can or should be applied to an e-book for children. This is a complex discussion that incorporates topics such as how interactive e-books are pushing the boundaries of what defines ‘e-book’ and even ‘book’. Book culture, established by print, is changing due to the influence of e-books and, as the leader in interactivity, children’s e-books are at the forefront of this discussion. Further conflicting this discussion are questions about how interactive features impact literacy. While literacy is not primarily an LIS concern, more properly falling into the domain of education, librarians and researchers must beware of how concerns about literacy from parents and educators are impacting the use of children’s e-books and the types of content being created. Further awareness is also needed regarding how the concept of literacy and the newly emerging ‘digital literacy’ contribute to understandings of the reading experience. The conspicuous citation of the Cooney Center’s study in recent media exemplifies the deeply rooted anxieties adults have about children reading e-books, many validated only by ingrained beliefs built around print. One such concern is about creating content with interactivity for the sake of interactivity versus content with interactivity for value, and how that impacts what constitutes an ‘e-book’ and by extension ‘book’.

The core of this debate surrounds the belief that if an e-book does not use interactivity in order to progress the narrative, it does not belong in the interactive e-book category (Itzkovitch par. 12) and should be differentiated as a game, or film, or other activity depending on its content. For example, interactive experiences such as touching an image that activates a simple animation like making a butterfly fly, or a tree drop leaves to the ground “do not add value to the story, and are therefore somewhat meaningless” (Itzkovitch par. 13). However, there are instances where this type of interactivity is successful; for example, *Alice in Wonderland* for the iPad and *The Peddler Lady of Gushing Cross* were created to be so visually stimulating that the interactivity, despite failing to advance the story, contributes to the reading experience by offering ‘eye

candy' to the reader (Iitzkovitch par. 17). The success of these titles aligns with opinions that the reading experience is more than the decoding of text or passive reception of the narrative.

However, interactivity may go beyond this perceived superficiality and add value to the e-book by creating an immersive experience that would be impossible in print. For example, with the *Numberlys* app, kids (and adults) learn about the alphabet through a series of interactive games connected by a text narrative. Its aesthetic is inspired by Fritz Lang's silent film, *Metropolis*, so the app offers a cinematic experience and gameplay to engage readers in a story about an imaginary origin of the alphabet (Iitzkovitch par. 18).

While defining the parameters of interactivity in e-books is important to the growth of e-books for children, children as readers are largely left out of the conversation, and this is a trend echoed throughout both industry and scholarly research. As behaviors acquired at a young age help form behaviors demonstrated throughout life (Beheshti and Large v), how children perceive e-books is paramount to the future of reading and should be given more attention in research and discourse.

### ***The Birth of a New Reading Experience***

*"I like to read e-books in bed in the dark before falling asleep." – 11 year-old girl, Georgia (Scholastic 9)*

The growing popularity of e-books for children has caused LIS professionals, researchers, and readers of all ages to question basic understandings established by print culture. The answers to questions that drive understandings of the reading experience, such as 'what is a book?' and 'what is reading?', are being reexamined. This is prominent in discussions surrounding reading for pleasure where the concept of a 'reader' is transformed into a 'user' to describe the optimal experience. While issues of literacy and the availability of technology dominate these conversations, what should be central to this discussion, but what is sadly lacking, is a child-centric approach that could provide significant insight into an area in which the preconceived beliefs and nostalgia of adults impose all understandings. This is especially evident in parent-child co-reading experiences.

### **E-books are Different**

Although commonalities exist that shape reading culture, the reading experience is a unique experience for everyone – child or adult. It is not limited to the decoding of text, literacy, or the content of reading material: it is the sum of these as well as all the sights, smells, emotions, thoughts, and actions that occur before, during and after reading. In LIS, the study of the reading experience also involves the purpose of reading, whether for education, work, everyday life, or pleasure. All this can be the same for both print and e-books, and yet they offer different experiences.

In examining children as readers of e-books, studies often tabulate how many children are reading them, but do not ask if they enjoy e-books and more importantly what they enjoy about the experience. As books are increasingly read in digital formats on computers, smart phones, tablets, and designated e-readers, the reader's experience is the important differentiating factor between print and e-books and is based on the pleasure each format facilitates (Burritt 1).

As far back at the 12<sup>th</sup> century, in Razi's "Treatise of the Self and the Spirit" (*Kitab al Nafs Wa'l Ruh*), pleasure has been explained as the relationship between the sensuous and intellectual (Haque 358). As the pleasure of reading is a balance between the physicality of the senses and the power of the mind, the medium, whether it be print, computer screen, dedicated e-reader, or tablet, plays as important a role as intellectual influences, such as content. The interactivity in e-books for children combines physical and intellectual facets of pleasure. Interactivity expands the reading experience, bringing in elements of user experience that help shape new definitions of reading (Colombo 272). Literature in this area has begun borrowing terminology and standards from studies in user experience (UX) design to help make sense of the changing reading experience. For example, Colombo et al. use the ISO standard for UX, which includes experiences "that occur before, during and after use" (qtd. in Colombo et al. 272). Notably, many aspects of UX mirror LIS notions of the reading experience such as those found in Nell who addresses the wide range of activities unified in the reading experience. While some scholars are happy to incorporate new elements into established traditions, others believe a complete refactoring of the reading experience is needed. For example, Lamb states that "[d]igital age technologies have made such an impact on the way we interact with content that the old definitions of reading and books no longer apply" (Lamb 13). These viewpoints illustrate the range of opinions in this matter, but more importantly, they demonstrate that e-books are starting to be regarded as fundamentally different from print and that these differences challenge understandings of the reading experience.

### **What is a Book? And What is Reading?**

What is a book? And what is reading? Good questions, especially considering the growing amount of media integrated in e-books for children. The difference between 'book' and 'e-book' used to apply only to the reading medium (book is paper and e-book is on screen) but the content was largely the same. With enhanced and interactive e-books this distinction is no longer the most appropriate. The sides of this debate are marked by those who retain notions from print culture and extend its understandings to e-reading and those who question whether those understandings can or should apply to e-reading at all. This deliberation is fueled on one side with concern for new generations of readers who may suffer from not having the same print experience as previous generations and on the other with the possibility that new generations of children are equally comfortable with both print and e-reading and therefore should not be limited by the definitions imposed by adults. Adams writes that "[t]oday's kids need to learn so much more than we had to when we were young. But because many have been trained to respond to and expect multiple simultaneous stimuli – visual, audible and tactile –

from their environment, computer games, TVs and smart phones, they are ready for a new way to learn and a new way to read” (2). Further, new generations need e-books to deliver a story told with visuals, music, voices and interactivity that engage kids: “[e]-books offer an ongoing entertainment experience that is reading, learning, entertainment and more” (Adams 2).

Despite crude accounts offered by dictionaries such as the Oxford English Dictionary, which defines ‘to read’ as “looking at and comprehending the meaning of (written or printed matter) by interpreting the characters or symbols of which it is composed” (OED par. 2), it is clear that ‘reading’ cannot be so confined. In his collection of essays *A Reader on Reading*, Alberto Manguel argues that the activity of reading, in its broadest sense, defines our species: “[w]e come into the world intent on finding narrative in everything,” writes Manguel, “landscape, the skies, the faces of others, the images and words that our species create” (32). E-books for children illustrate this expansive and inclusive definition as reading now involves a combination of physicality and intellectuality that it did not previously, such as watching and listening to media, playing games, moving objects, tilting devices, while simultaneously reading text. For many, this new and almost limitless definition (or lack thereof) is difficult to accept.

### **Co-Reading: Adults and Children, Nostalgia and Change**

An added element to this discussion is the fact that children’s reading sometimes involves the practice and ritual of co-reading. As a joint experience, co-reading inextricably involves the preferences of adults and their rooted sensibilities about reading. Reading with children is also a deeply nostalgic experience, and currently that nostalgia is focused around a world created by print. Poignantly, Rosin writes, “Norman Rockwell never painted Boy Swiping Finger on Screen, and our own vision of a perfect childhood has never adjusted to fit that now-common tableau” (Rosin par. 16). However, it is false to presume that adults are clinging to print culture because they consciously think it is intellectually better. For many it is an admittedly emotional connection to print that determines what they give their children to read. Despite this self-awareness, it is important to note that residual print culture impacts adults’ perceptions of e-reading and e-books and therefore impacts children’s perceptions and access.

The AAP reports that e-books now make up 22.5% of all publishing revenue in U.S.; other surveys, however, suggest that e-books have not penetrated the storytime market to the same degree (Greenfield par. 4). However, it seems to be the parents who have a preference, not the children (Vaala and Takeuchi). The Cooney Center’s *QuickReport: Parent Co-Reading Survey* revealed that 89.9% of surveyed iPad owning parents prefer to read print books to their kids; after all “[t]here’s nothing like reading a book and turning the pages and books require no batteries” says a Mother of a 10 year-old girl from Massachusetts (Scholastic 18). Even parents who are avid e-book readers themselves have reservations about e-books for children. These parents freely acknowledge their digital double standard and state that it is important to them that children be surrounded by print books and “to experience turning physical pages as they learn about shapes, colors and animals” (Bosman and Richtel 1). Speaking of

nostalgia and the emotional importance of co-reading, parents also reported that they “like cuddling up with their child and a book, and fear that a shiny gadget might get all the attention” (Bosman and Richtel 1). For some parents, for whom the reading experience is more than the content of books or e-books but rather about intimacy, they fear that intimacy will not be achieved with a screen:

It’s intimacy, the intimacy of reading and touching the world. It’s the wonderment of her reaching for a page with me,” said Leslie Van Every, 41, a loyal Kindle user in San Francisco whose husband, Eric, reads on his iPhone. But for their 2 1/2-year-old daughter, Georgia, dead-tree books, stacked and strewn around the house, are the lone option (Bosman and Richtel 1).

Although limited to only a few studies, the opinions of children regarding e-books shows they enjoy both mediums. Maynard found that “[w]hen asked whether they prefer printed or electronic books, all of the adults chose printed books, whilst the children were more ambivalent, with half preferring electronic books” (Maynard 236). The 2012 study by Scholastic reported children showing a willingness to try e-books. For example, a 10 year old girl from Pennsylvania wrote “I don’t have e-books, but they sound fun” (11); similarly, a 13 year old boy from California wrote “I’m not sure how much I would like to read e-books, but do want to try it!” (11).

With evidence that children may not have the same notions of reading and reading mediums as adults, co-reading becomes a more interesting experience to navigate and, although not all parents are embracing e-books for children, many concede that they may be an option. For example, a father of a 6 year old in Oregon writes that “[r]eading is evolving. I love print books and generally prefer them but I see the utility of an e-reader. I think she will discover on her own how she prefers to read” (Scholastic 13). While hesitance and subtle acceptance seems to be the trend among parents, some parents share and promote their child’s love of e-books: a review on Amazon’s website by Dr. B. Ashim for the Kindle edition of *Clever Little Mouse* by Paul Ramage said: “[m]y six and a half year-old daughter read this book on Kindle. She enjoyed it very much and described it as the ‘excitingest’ book she has ever read” (Hall 1).

There is no argument that the reading experience is changing, and new generations of readers may have different opinions, assumptions, and preferences for the meanings of ‘book’ and ‘reading’. More research needs to be done to determine those ideas. Still, there are other large conceptual frameworks such as literacy, publishing, technological growth, and print culture that have great influence on children reading and the adaptation of e-books for children. These should also be given attention in order to better understand the changing reading experience and the place of e-books for children within that shifting paradigm.

## **Conclusion**

*“I would like to get an e-book reader so I will want to read more books.” – 16 year-old boy, Ohio (Scholastic 14).*

E-books for children have been delivered into a world ready to embrace them and yet filled with self-doubt. Can technology adapt to meet their needs? Can libraries make room for these new additions? Can the reading experience adjust to the changes they bring? These questions and others are asked as LIS scholars and professionals, industry experts and researchers, educators, parents and, of course, children work to understand where e-books will fit in and what value they will offer.

The history of e-books for children, though brief, illustrates the rapid onset of the medium. Once the technology was available to meet the advanced demands of children's books, e-books for children were developed that go beyond print and basic e-books and utilize enhanced features such as multimedia and interactivity to engage and immerse readers. The positive and negative repercussions of these changes for the reading experience are debated in the literatures of literacy, technology, and LIS. What may be drawn from these debates is that more research is needed, especially research that focuses on children reading e-books for pleasure, and the opinions and preferences of children. Past work from LIS scholars and professionals involved the categorization and description of e-books for children as new media developed, and issues involving the provision of access to e-books through public libraries, school libraries, and online libraries. Attention must also be paid to the overarching concepts that govern reading culture, such as the definition of 'book' and 'reading' as well as the emotional and nostalgic relationship readers have with print. Due in part to the drastic changes in reading media brought about by e-books for children, these ideas are in a state of flux and must be described in order to provide an understanding of the changes and challenges facing the reading and e-reading experience. As e-books for children grow and mature they will no doubt find their way in the world of reading, and having a clearer understanding of that world will nurture the reading experience.

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