AERA Open Special Topic Call for Papers

Screens, Apps, and Digital Books for Young Children: The Promise of Multimedia

Special Topic Editors: Adriana Bus, Susan B. Neuman, and Kathleen Roskos

Apps, digital books and educational media programs (video streaming) are increasingly available in the young child’s world, both at home and school. While important technical advances have been made in the design quality of these digital resources, much remains to be learned about their influences on early literacy development and experience, family literacy practices, and early literacy teaching. The time is ripe not only for synthesizing evidence from recent digital book and media research, but for exploring the potential of new media to stimulate and advance young children’s learning.

We are faced with pivotal and pressing questions: What are differential effects of screen media? What digital affordances work well for whom and when? When are digital affordances impediments to literacy development, although often appealing and playful for young children (and also time-fillers)? Under what conditions do young emergent and early readers thrive in a digital reading environment? How can adults support and engage in effective co-viewing and shared book reading in an increasingly digital world?

The more time young children and beginning readers spend with digital devices, the more important it is that rich language and strong narratives are embedded in digital media sources and that these applications are optimally designed and evidence-based. To date, however, we have only a modest knowledge base about the instructional design of media and its implications for language and literacy. And, although the number of publications on digital media (streaming video, books) has increased over the last five years, we currently lack a consensus on how media might best be structured, used, and organized to promote children’s learning in formal and informal settings--an issue that needs attention in the literature.

To these points, this special topic proposes to explore and address these urgent problems. We invite authors and researchers to submit articles that critically review extant research, report current qualitative and quantitative findings, and extend research into new areas (e.g., robotics, artificial intelligence) and methodologies (e.g. eye-tracking) that contribute to a deeper understanding of the young child’s language and early literacy development and experience in a new world.

Interested authors should submit a single-spaced, one-page abstract describing their proposed article. Authors chosen from the pool of abstracts will be invited to submit a full manuscript. Invited manuscripts will be peer-reviewed, meaning that invitation to submit a full manuscript is not a guarantee of acceptance. Accepted manuscripts are subject to AERA Open’s one-time open access fee (see https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/journal/aera-open#submission-guidelines for details).

Publication Timeline:
June 10, 2018: Submission deadline for abstracts (submit to AERAOpenEditors@aera.net)
August 10, 2018: Invitation to authors to submit a manuscript
January 10, 2018: Manuscripts due
From Spring 2019 on: Articles published as completed
Please direct questions regarding the special topic to Susan Neuman (sbneuman@nyu.edu). Please consult the AERA Open website (above) for general guidelines on manuscript submission.

Adriana Bus is a Professor at the Free University in Amsterdam. She evaluates nationwide literacy interventions to promote literacy development in the Netherlands and she carries out experiments to show how technology may contribute to early literacy and which formats are most promising in early literacy learning. She has published numerous research articles in a range of leading journals, and has contributed chapters to edited books on early literacy. She has won the International Reading Association’s ‘Computers in Reading Award’; since 2013 she is an elected member of the Reading Hall of Fame of the International Literacy Association; and, since April 2016, a knight in the order of the Dutch Lion.

Susan B. Neuman is a Professor of Childhood Education and Literacy Development at the Steinhardt School, New York University. Previously, she has been a Professor at the University of Michigan and has served as the U.S. Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education. She is currently Co-editor of Reading Research Quarterly, the flagship journal in reading research. Her research and teaching interests include early childhood policy, curriculum, and early reading instruction for prek-grade 3 children who live in poverty. She has received the Oscar Causey Award for outstanding literacy research, the A.B. Herr Award for lifetime achievement, the Reading Hall of Fame, and is an AERA Fellow since 2015.

Kathleen A. Roskos is a Professor of Education at John Carroll University in Cleveland, Ohio. She has conducted a range of quantitative and qualitative studies that address the critical factors of early literacy development, early literacy assessment and intervention in educational settings, early childhood educator learning and professional development for effective implementation of evidence-based interventions, and more recently the role of e-books in early literacy development and learning. Currently her research focus is on the design and effective use of e-books as teaching and learning tools that support early literacy development, advance early literacy skills, and reduce literacy risk in young children.