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Children's Games in the New Media Age

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Chapter 8

Co-Curating Children's Play Cultures

John Potter

One of the key publicly accessible representations of the playground games research after its completion was a website which was produced collaboratively by the British Library and some of the children who participated in the project. It is important to note at the outset that not all the children were involved in this process and that, for those who were, their agency was constrained by both time pressures and issues of hierarchy. This was, after all, the main outward facing online portal of a major cultural institution and, in the context of Foucault's reflections on heterotopia, libraries and museums are among those institutions producing an immobility which contrasts starkly with the children's dynamic and participatory play cultures (Foucault, 1984). Nevertheless, there was a willingness on the part of the library to generate and engage with design and navigation ideas from representative groups of children; it is these which this chapter will examine and situate within appropriate theories of design, of authoring in new media forms, and in relation to the concept of 'heterotopian games', adapted from Foucault (see Chapter 1).

Based within the 'Language and Literacy' section of the 'Learning' pathway on the main library pages, the site, *Playtimes: A century of children's games and rhymes* (British Library, 2010) offers the visitor two parallel means of negotiating a selection of resources from the playground games archive. One of these is the 'Browse Games' portal, represented across half the screen by a black and white image of children skipping. On the other half of the screen, in colour, is the 'Kids' zone', represented by a cartoon-like depiction of a playground, commissioned for the project, from Danish artist Bjorn Rune Lie, (2011). The former leads to a set of thumbnails, arranged by game category, behind which short video clips play as a series of adult experts recount directly to camera and/or as voiceover, the main elements of a particular playground game or games and show some examples of them. The latter set of links in the 'Kids' zone' leads to an area introduced and co-curated by some of the children which features their own scripts, drawings and designs for a set of accompanying animations. These links are made accessible by users hovering and clicking on cartoon figures, behind which are the categories of play in the games, arranged non-hierarchically across the screen space. In this section, the voiceovers were provided by the children themselves.

Panels of children from both of the primary schools involved in the playground games project made significant contributions to the design of the 'Kids' Zone' on the website as well as to the curatorial choices and interpretation of the material. This chapter looks in some detail at the authoring processes involved and the eventual outcome as realised on the site itself. It draws on examples of the children's designs and videos of their pitches and presentations during the site-building process in order to say something about the nature of new media production and its relationship to the lived experience of digital culture.

In order to understand and contextualise this aspect of the project, there are a number of potentially useful theoretical traditions as well as emergent ways of thinking about children's productive engagement with new literacies and new technologies. These include ideas ranging from participatory design (Druin 1999; Kafai, Ching, and Marshall, 1997) through to conceptions of learner voice and participatory research with children (Fielding 2004; Selwyn, Potter, and Cranmer 2010) and on into the conception of curatorship itself as a new literacy practice in the lived experience of culture (Potter, 2010). The last of these locates some of its evidence base in younger learners' experience of co-design and co-authoring in new media and provides a corollary to the process of discussion and design within the creation of the playground games website.

The chapter will draw on records of the children's work during the development of the website – their concept drawings, presentations to the design team, and animations made to add to the website, to introduce categories of play. It will look at how this evidence connects with thinking about how younger learners become productive and engaged in new media more widely, in order to raise further questions. Did these activities make possible a child's-eye view of the history and contemporary culture of children's games? How did the children think about the transition from the secret places of play to the public world of museum website exhibition? What did this process reveal about their productive engagement with authoring in new media and their conceptions about how knowledge is owned, accessed and distributed?

Firstly, though, it is important to elaborate on the assertion that new media production can be conceived as a form of self-curatorship in which children are seen as having their own agentic dispositions (Potter, 2012). The aspects of 'curatorship' of experience which suggest themselves as new literacy practices entail the merging of many skills and attributes into one, all of which involve being

literate and productive with new media authoring. In fact, there is frequent and growing use of the word ‘curated’ to describe what the creators and editors of online spaces actually do. Whereas, in earlier media forms, the apposite verbs which were used to credit an author would have been simply ‘written’, ‘edited’ or even ‘created’, it is clear that they don’t capture all the self-representational activities or *practices* in new media authoring which the verb ‘curated’ does. This is because *curating* a site is not only about writing or creating within it but also collecting, interpreting, distributing, assembling, disassembling, and moving it across different spaces and forms. In other words, it is an active practice which is larger in its reach, scope and nature than the others but which contains and subsumes them. The meaning in the eventual exhibited form of video, visual art, music or other text, is made from the previously selected resources by knowing how the resources and forms work together across the many available modes of communication. In digital culture, *curating* is, in its most sophisticated form, about organizing how these different resources work *intertextually* to make meaning; this is a new process, resulting from human agency in the changed *social arrangements, practices* and *artefacts* of new media (Lievrouw and Livingstone 2006: 2).

Curating, as a verb, incorporates many sub-components and actions; it suggests at least the following: *collecting, interpreting, cataloguing, arranging and assembling for exhibition, and displaying*. From the outset, the children were aware that they would be helping in some way to construct a website about the games which they had been helping to collect and record throughout the project. For some of the children the website design offered the possibility of extending the reach of the project by making some of the previously hidden aspects of their playground culture accessible to a potentially vast audience.

Whether or not younger learners are full users of social media, and increasing numbers are, children are aware that online spaces are under specific kinds of authorial control which are designed for either private or public consumption. They involve the previously noted characteristics of *collecting, cataloguing, arranging and assembling for exhibition, displaying* and it is worth commenting further on how they apply in this case.

Collecting in this context refers to gathering found resources, such as video clips, sound files, still images and more and placing them inside or alongside self-created media texts. In earlier research into digital video production, with children of the same age as the playground project, analysis of their

authoring practices revealed sophisticated, and appropriated re-enactments of habitual play which were subsequently collected, played with and incorporated into new intertextual forms (Potter, 2012). In this project, the resources were collected in order to be accessed through specific categories by a wider audience. The children consulted in the design process needed to make such categories stand for them and for their own experiences when they were not personally present, by investing effort in *cataloguing* as an essential part of the authoring process.

Arranging and assembling were further key aspects of curatorship in the project. Each of these skills requires knowledge of how elements can be in dialogue with one another, to suggest specific meanings by their location and juxtaposition in the space onscreen and in the navigational metaphor chosen. This is an active process of working with navigability and intertextuality. Of course, the ultimate editing and assembly of the website was out of the hands of the children in the project, but ideas presented by the children consulted were represented important contributions to the overall look and feel of the pages.

Miller wrote how digital media create their own 'sensual field' which respects 'the larger integrity of connections between the media it incorporates' (2008: 71). This 'integrity of connections' is an important concept because it suggests a set of organising principles located, not least, in the *displaying* aspect of curatorship. The particular kind of production in new media dictates this to an extent so that, in the examples of new media in these studies, the navigable site has its own conventions, the breaking of which results in incoherence and lack of a viable representational form for a collection. Where it works, however, it allows users to control, select and publish aspects of their performed, recorded self in new media; and we can see here an essential life skill; the management of resources and assets made for, by and about us in a range of media, as posited in recent work which focuses specifically on the digitisation of personal memories in media assets (Garde-Hansen, Hoskins, and Reading 2009; Williams, Leighton John, and Rowland 2009). Of course, for the children in this project there was the added concern to represent the project itself to an outside world in the clearest way possible using media forms and genres close to their cultural experience.

From the design process it was possible to draw on evidence from collected interviews and a planning paper trail to understand children's perceptions of the project as it formed. Their recorded actions during the briefing and during the construction of the website revealed evidence of the children's

understanding of museum and library curatorship as a communicative process. As the original project proposal stated, the aim was to explore the 'kinds of description, classification and interpretation which (the children) propose for the public display of childlore'. It was simultaneously important to identify ways in which this connected with their understanding of how a website attracts visitors and represents information.

The choice of methods in the analysis was designed to look carefully at the various kinds of texts produced by the children for the way information was organised and for evidence of authorial intent in the finished product. Children in the project were involved in the overall look and feel of the website, its design elements and content right from the start and workshops were held with both sets of children in the two research sites. They knew that their work would be used to design access to the material. So, for the purposes of answering questions about their input, amongst the evidence collected were drawings made by the children, as well as videos of them presenting to the group about the proposed design they had made, along with designs for character sets playing games to be animated by the library's chosen animation company, alongside their scripts for the narratives of those animations.

In order to examine the project as a piece of participant-design it was useful to begin at the top level of navigation, proceed through some of the available original designs for the site, record how the children presented them during the workshops (by means of some videos made at the time) and finish by examining some of the drawings for the animations and how these were rendered on the site at the end of the process.

Earlier in the chapter there was a description of how the site displays the navigational options to a visitor and the gateway to the 'Kids' zone' as it appears on the British Library website. Onscreen, a school playground provides the metaphorical navigational elements with each of the game categories accessible by means of clicking on a single cartoon character or character set. These nine categories emerged from earlier discussions between the researchers and the children's panels in the schools and became the accepted way of collecting and organising the games. They became central to the way in which navigation was organized in the final design for the website. In the adult zone the onwards links to the resources for visitors were provided by the standard horizontal menu system, with site users encouraged to click links below thumbnails of talking heads. In the 'Kids' zone' however, a more playful

element was introduced with the cartoon character sets playing the games on a playground square orientated corner to corner and seen from above (see Figure 8.1).



Figure 8.1 The Kids' zone interface from the Playtimes pages on the site, by Danish artist Bjorn Rune Lie (2011)

The visitor to the site peers into a school playground from above, a neighbouring window perhaps, and selects the character or character set of choice. As the mouse hovers over each one of these, the categories are revealed. A click takes the visitor through to the children's own scripted narratives and designed – if not fully authored – animation sequences.

Onscreen in the final website design for the kids' zone the categories were associated with cartoon characters and set out as follows:

Ball Games (top of the screen, top corner of the playground, three figures, two children, one rabbit, playing with a ball);

Playing with Things (left hand side, two figures, one girl and one duck playing with a spinning top and a hula hoop respectively);

Clapping Games (a sailor figure, disproportionately tall and possibly on stilts, walking across the space, playing "I'm a long-legged sailor");

Pretend Play (far right, a group of 3 characters, a superhero, a cowboy and a girl with a pram);

Running Around Games (centre left, a giant policeman figure chasing two smaller figures right to left across the playground, playing "cops and robbers");

Singing and Dancing (two girls, one singing into a microphone and one dancing);

Jokes and Rude Rhymes (three figures at the foot of the screen, disappearing off at the bottom, two giggling girls facing each other and one embarrassed male figure with a moustache and glasses looking back at the visitor);

Skipping Games (bottom centre left, two female figures, one is in the game as “Cinderella dressed in yellow” and the other in what appears to be Spanish dance costume turn the rope for a figure of a bear to jump over);

Counting Out Rhymes (bottom right under the tree, three smaller figures surround and count out a larger cat figure who looks unhappy and appears to have a thermometer in its mouth from 'cat's got the flu/out goes you').

The playground as designed for the site looks like an urban one but clearly it could represent many different places and times, with some archaic clothing and traditional characters suggesting a historical element to the links which could be followed by a visitor. Imaginary characters play with children who, in turn, play with each other. The page contains elements which suggest life, movement and playfulness before any choices are made as wind 'blows across' the screen suggested by animated leaves moving. Birds are drawn on the ground by the chalked in hopscotch squares.

Starting with the navigational metaphor which represents the 'Kids' zone' on the site then, what evidence is there from the workshops that the children had input into this? What was the nature of the input? And what can we infer from this evidence about their knowledge of how websites work as well as how their knowledge of how the curatorial process works in this case?

Drawings and videos provide useful examples on which to draw to help with these questions. As for similar research conducted with children's drawings in another project (Selwyn, Potter, and Cranmer 2010; Selwyn, Boraschi, and Ozkula 2009) researchers were looking for key markers of purpose and motivation alongside consistency of message and purpose. In this project, the drawings were made by children aged between 8 and 11.

Methods derived from visual analysis at the level of design provided a useful set of criteria as a starting point for looking at these drawings, namely a consideration of *Information value* - the placement of elements with specific values attached to the zones in an image and in relation to an audience; *Saliency* - elements which attract the attention of an audience member with their placement and relation; *Framing* - the presence or absence of connectives between elements that suggest they belong together (drawn from Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006). The central two-part question being asked was: What in each image was criterial to the children and what did it allow us to say about their knowledge of, and engagement with, the design process?



Figure 8.2 'Games from now and then'

Other drawings are useful counterpoints. Figure 8.2 shows 'Games from now and then'. Here, applying the *information value*, *salience* and *framing* criteria (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006) we see designers (two children created this one) approaching this in an organised manner. First of all, both the

adult and child areas are represented side-by-side. The title is prominent, and yet this doesn't appear to be a children's playground in a school so much as an outdoor play area. A swing, a slide and some hills to play on are joined by a skipping rope. The menu on the right hand side is demarcated from the rest of the screen by a red line. Titles as 'adults for teaching', the menu follows beneath with 3 further sub-categories: 'Playing games', 'make a game' and 'watch a game'. Below this are the skipping rope and the slide alongside the children's names. Critical to these children are simple, easily demarcated zones which allow elements to be presented discretely from one another. To an audience there is high information value from the placement of the different elements but not quite so much overriding sense of a whole unified set of elements. Interestingly, on this page, the designers suggest it is possible to design and make your own game, suggesting a sophisticated and productive level of engagement and an awareness of the active and engaging nature of many such websites. The title of this piece 'Games from then and now' shows an emergent sense of the historical perspective on the project. Researchers, both in this project and elsewhere, report that children are disinclined to acknowledge that their games have a history, often claiming to have made them up (See Chapters 2 and 3). Creating the web resource, at least for some of the children, seems to have helped to develop more of a sense of the past, following on from earlier sessions at the library in which samples from the Opie archive were played (see Chapter 2). This is further developed in the voiceover commentaries for the animations. This engagement with history forms one aspect of what we have described as 'heterotopian games'. Foucault's contention that the library is a heterotopian institution, arresting time in the very attempt to document and exhibit it, may seem a bleak assertion. But children at play, on the other hand, as Burn argues in Chapter 1, are historical amnesiacs, their habitus exhibiting a daily forgetting of its own history, to paraphrase Bourdieu (1992). While Bourdieu's proposal applies to adults and children and adults alike, the repeated denial of history and provenance in children's interviews about their play suggests a particular case.

In the act of curating their own games and the histories behind them, they achieve two things. On the one hand, they unfix, at least a little, the immobility Foucault perceives in the archive, adding dynamic representations of the moment of contemporary play which they inhabit. On the other hand, reaching back into the histories of play their parents recalled, they dissolve something of the amnesia of the habitus. They saw this as a kind of time travel: one child described the historian of folklore, Steve Roud, who helped them with the history, as Dr Who, taking them back in time in his Tardis. Too

celebratory an account of this process, however, would be misplaced. Rather, the historicizing of play here is an educational intervention, which attempts to balance a proper regard for the children's cultural knowledge with a move from tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge, not only of their own play but of how it connects with the play of previous generations.

In Figure 8.3, by contrast, we learn more about the designer than about how the resource could be navigated or the historical perspective of the resource as a whole 'Playground activities' is the main title of this piece displayed top left. Four games follow, dispersed across the page with no unifying element such as an enclosing shape and neither are there dividing lines and neat menus and markers. It seems to have taken a long time for the football to be drawn. It has been very neatly coloured in and shaded in such a way as to create a 3-D effect. So, catching games, football, clapping games, trading cards and, finally, on the left-hand side the giving up game, with the word mercy written across somebody's raised right hand, probably a truce term used to 'gain respite' in a game, as the Opies put it (Opie and Opie, 1959)¹. We learn, in other words, about this particular child's favourite playground activities.



Figure 8.3 Some favourite games suggested for the web page by one of the children in the project

Clearly, as we would expect, there is a difference between how the different children engaged in the task and reflected their own dispositions. Some were understandably motivated to prioritise their own favourite games on the site. Others wanted to provide an experience for visitors to the site which led to them engaging directly with playful activity. For example, the child who designed figure 8.4 was principally concerned with adding a facility to the site which allowed people to enjoy the experience of waiting for images to build and load by becoming active and playing a game. This awareness of the nature of browsing practices around both entertainment and information gathering is sophisticated and fully realised in the design. You can see the bar drawn centrally with the word 'Loading' and the number '100' at the extreme right. Beneath that and drawn fairly sizeably in relation to the whole screen is the game. Asked in a videotaped interview about this design during the workshop, the boy says: 'After

you've pressed something, say skipping rope, and it's loading and you're waiting and it goes up to 100% you press on this game...you go through the maze collecting things...running shoes...'. The engagement

¹ 'Mercy' is not referenced by the Opies as a truce term, but is referred to in one online source describing ex-patriate English children in Turkey playing arm-wrestling: <http://steepholm.livejournal.com/15548.html?thread=67516>, accessed 11.7.12

with this aspect of the site is a holistic experience of having fun, taking part in pastimes whilst waiting for the information about pastimes to load.

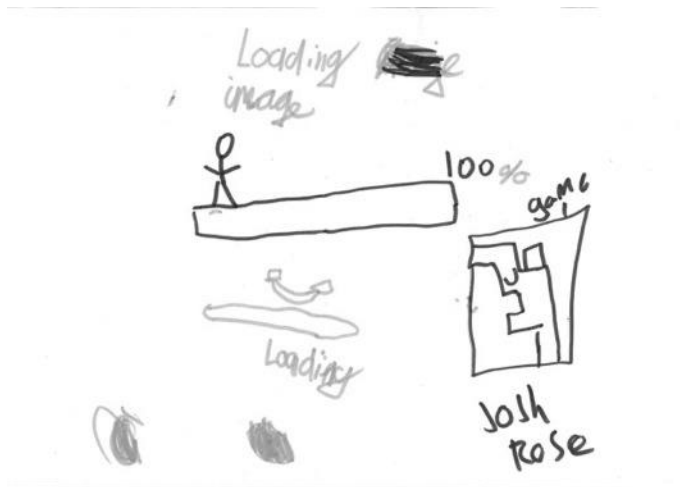


Figure 8.4 Proposed waiting game for visitors to the site

One of the other proposals for the site produced by one of the girls in the workshop survived almost intact in the official design. It ended up providing a set of visual metaphors and a navigation system which was very close to the one eventually adopted.



Figure 8.5 Games of the past and present

In this design, shown in Figure 8.5 and entitled 'Games of the past and present', you can see clearly see areas of high information value. There are a number of words onscreen, most prominently of all, the word 'Games' written in high colour bottom left. Balancing each other on the left hand side, and on the right-hand side, are 2 key elements of web navigation. Written on the left-hand side is the word 'help' and directly opposite 'tour of sight (sic)'. These are balanced at the top and bottom of the design by 'photos' and 'videos'. The design is clearly informed by a high level of awareness of classic elements of information based web pages. There is a unifying metaphor in terms of both place and outdoor and climatic conditions. This is recognisably a playground, containing swings, slide and climbing frame. But

there is a strong unifying connected theme of weather in the presence of bright sunshine, rain and even night sky elements. Trading card games, clapping games (drawn inside the circle of the sun), ball games and more are all available as per the brief to represent the games categories established in the project. Through it all a river flows, sometimes used as a wider key signifier of a London location; though in fact this London playground space was built and designed during the project to incorporate a painted blue river running through painted green fields and hills. This mixture of purposeful content, imaginative content, and locative content is consistent with the purpose of the site, to be engaging and accessible to children when they visit and select the 'Kids' zone'. More than that, there is an attempt to be faithful to the aims of the project, namely that of curating the experience of playground games for a visitor. This designer wishes to render the experience in different media forms for the end user, realising both video and still images need to be considered.

This is one level of analysis of one design but we are also fortunate enough to have a video of the girl concerned, presenting the pitch for how it might work to an audience from the British Library and the playground games researchers. In the video, as she talks through the design with the workshop audience,

we see the use of many modes of expression in one performed explanation of the navigation of the site. She brings the process to life by means of gesture and performance and, with this in mind, we can employ a means of reading these modes together through time as the video plays derived from the multimodal analysis of moving image texts (after Burn and Parker, 2003). Combining a traditional transcription with an examination of other salient modes in her performance helps us to draw some conclusions about the nature of the engagement in the process as a whole:

00-10 seconds:

It's called games of the past and present

And look all round if you can find different places

(she waves her hand round and round the page/screen/ attempting to lift it while she speaks; she is a performer of the website as well as a viewer. She expresses agency in the gesture, she chooses not to abstract herself from the performance and hold it out front, looking at it from above. Her finger traces the route of a mouse arrow across the page...)

10 – 22 seconds:

Here's a puddle that's splashed out of the river if you scroll over it then it says video games (text revealed from under objects)

22- 30 seconds:

...if you carry on go over this hill it says trading cards – (again she performs with the hand sweeping left up the hill to the right, the movement through the screen space)

30-37 seconds:

...And then there's lots of different places (this time stabbing at the picture to show the different jumping off points)

...if you scroll over different things will pop up...

37-45 seconds

...so there's photos, games, video games, trading games, clapping games (she has internalised the typography and categorization made during the project) and now she wants to see it represented prominently in the design...

45 – 58 seconds

(A researcher asks about when you click on the ball games what will you see...)

... you'll go er er ... it will zap you to the ball area where there's different things to watch, the background is the ball area with balls flying around...and then there's...there's video of board games

This child knows about web design and what happens when you click on elements and things happen, resources are displayed and presented in different media; you travel through the pages by being 'zapped' to different places. This much is an obvious and even prosaic finding in the digital age when we would expect the experiences of viewing sites to have been habitualised among children with regular web access. What is new and revealed by taking a closer look at both the drawn and performed elements which are essential to the site for her, in both the still image and in the video, is the embodied and aesthetic response to the activity. She wishes to perform the site as it would be encountered by a visitor and, at the same time, she wishes to meet the demands of the brief and to make the collection accessible to a viewer. This level of construction of the site from the raw material of the collection shows a concern for content as well as process, for production as well as consumption. It illustrates a high level of personal engagement and investment in the process.

I would further argue that the presentation of this design and its associated meaning making resources across the available modes is evidence of an agentive awareness of two kinds of curatorial processes. Firstly, there is an awareness of the responsibility in the outward facing and specific initial task of representing a curated exhibition of a collection to an audience. Secondly, there is a developed sense of what it is to place and connect resources in new media authoring and to know how they work in an ensemble of meaning making. I have argued elsewhere that this represents a new literacy and cultural practice of curatorship (Potter, 2012).

A further element of design for which the children were responsible, though at a lower level of personal agency, was the construction of the animated resources inside the 'Kids' zone' itself. Once this branch of the collection has been accessed by an end user, they find themselves navigating the school playground and clicking on categories which lead to short animated sequences. As the sequences play, children's voices provide a commentary about the game or games in question. For these sections of the site, children had control over the elements which were to be animated as well as the spoken sequences. In one of the modes, that of movement through time, they had very low levels of agency; in others, that of the drawn elements they had much higher agency and awareness of the final purpose to which their work would be put. In most cases, their drawings frequently represented the possibility of movement in the way

they were constructed. The animation company in question largely pursued these aspects which were present as visual cues in the drawings. The children provided commentaries which were used as voiceovers for the animations and these were self-authored. The process leading to their composition involved forms of research such as interviewing parents and interviewing the historian of folklore Steve Roud, a consultant on the project (Roud, 2010). In this sense, aspects of their play culture usually confined to tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1983) were developed as explicit knowledge through the research process. Two members of the research team have considered elsewhere how the children in this project were encouraged to become researchers (Marsh and Richards, 2012). In this case, one aspect of such knowledge was an awareness of the history of the games, commonly disowned in interviews with children who claim to have ‘just made it up’ (Opie and Opie, 1959; Beresin, 2010; Jopson, Burn and Robinson, this volume). One example is transcribed below from the ‘Running around games’ pathway off the main ‘Kids’ Zone’ site:

There are loads of different versions of Tig, sometimes it is called Touch or Tig. Hundreds of years ago it was called He. You run around and if you touch someone they’re “It”. We also play “Chain Tag”. One person is “It” when he catches someone they hold hands until they become a long chain. Bulldog is a hundred years old. Back then when they tagged someone they had to lift them up for five seconds or pin them down...Today we play star wars droids chasing Darth Vader.

These pieces of writing were composed and narrated by the children and the compilations are brief, lasting in the region of 30 – 40 seconds, and accompanied by moving image sequences created by the animators from the character sets and backgrounds designed by the children. In the example quoted above, a concern for the task at hand, representing the games of the past, is accompanied by a wish to see contemporary cultural affiliations and interests represented in the designs. Thus, whilst Tig and Bulldog, as popular examples of lived playground experience, have a place in representing ‘Running around games’ to the outside world on the site, so too do the appropriations into fantasy play of the Star Wars characters. The sense of the past is never far away, as in the interjections about games played ‘hundreds of years ago’. This constant reminder of the overall purpose of the site and its relationship to the past suggests a full engagement with the need to relate the histories of these practices. They are aware of their responsibilities, as researchers and as curators.

But what of the drawings which were created for this part of the resource? In the examples shown below, you can see how the original drawings contained the possibility of movement. In figure 8.6 the skipping ropes twist away from the viewer, and the weather plays a part with rain blowing in with a cloud on the left. Critical to the children here, as in the earlier website designs are the influence of the weather, the fact of being outside, represented by the tree on the extreme right, and, the proximity of other skippers. Activity and movement are highly salient in the overall design of this space as suggested by the drawn character sets produced by the children. Interestingly, four female figures are represented and one male, a fairly accurate representation of the gender balance in skipping games on this playground. The commentary on the site refers to gender and to changes over time with boys joining in '50 years ago; but then mainly being an activity in which girls dominate.



Figure 8.6 Skipping games as drawn for the animated sequences

In the conker games drawing in Figure 8.7, the close-up and overhead view shows the detail of the ties to the fingers and the movement of the string. Each nail is carefully drawn and the key purpose here seems to be to provide a plan view of the action with the kinks and ties of the string faithfully recorded. Conkers was not recorded on either playground during the project. However, this image can only be read as a committed imaginative effort to recreate the game from the description of others, perhaps parents.

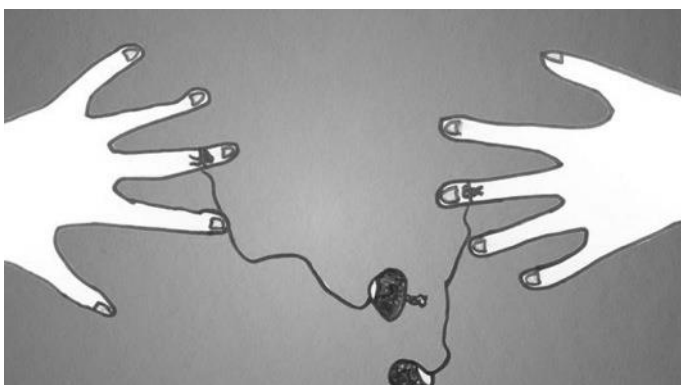


Figure 8.7 Conker game drawn for the animated sequences

In another drawing, the sailor at sea (a character in the widely-played A Sailor Went to Sea, Sea, Sea clapping game; see Bishop and Burn, 2013) is travelling through large waves, with the clouds scudding along behind him as the boat tips slightly and he balances on the prow (see Figure 8.8). The image of the sailor himself suggests that Popeye is a reference point, albeit a somewhat surprising one for contemporary children, with his pipe and smoke rising towards the sky. But again, movement is salient in the picture and the detail of the waves and clouds all make sense in the overall scheme.



Figure 8.8 Sailor on the sea drawn for the animated sequences

The visitors to the ‘Kids’ zone’ and the *Playtimes* site as a whole comprise an unseen and unknown audience for whom the children are engaged in acts of preservation of memory and artefact. Curating here means preservation and memory, as we have seen; but it also means descriptive commentary, interpretation, the extension of their own memory into family memory, and the recovery of history in their accounts of the games. In the site design, using drawings for animation and short, recorded

commentary the children co-curate this space with varying degrees of ownership of the process, bounded as they are by the demands of the cultural institution, the researchers and their peers in the project as a whole.

Nevertheless, we have seen how their agency in the process of representation remains high, with significant personal investment by them in written elements and designs which they knew would be viewed by large numbers of people beyond their playgrounds. It is possible that the preservation of their own lived experience in this way finds an affinity with wider processes of self-representation and reflexive authoring of the lived experience in new media. This is a potentially powerful means of giving voice to experience which is part of young people's everyday, wider cultural experience as they grow and use social media for themselves. In this process, of course, they will curate other aspects of their lives. This is not to say that this self-reflexive and agentive authoring can't happen with younger learners, including those of the same age as the children in the primary school project. This has been seen at the time of writing in the blog, *NeverSeconds*, by a nine year old girl in Scotland who provides a daily photograph and commentary on her school dinners, rating them for 'health' and 'mouthfuls' (how many to finish it) amongst other things (Payne, 2012). Her awareness of impact, and developed sense of her own curatorship of her experience, have won her a large following worldwide and created an impact beyond her immediate situation (BBC News, 2012).

As we have seen earlier in the chapter, reviewing the videos of the web designers in the playground games research reveals a heightened understanding, on their part, of the behaviours and activity of audiences on websites beyond simply the organisational and navigational issues. The exploration of the website as *performance* is engendered in the descriptions of the designs. But what of their relationship to the mission of cultural curatorship, to the stated purposes of the site, which was to preserve and exhibit the playground game as a fact of previously lived and, indeed, ongoing living experience?

The aspects of 'curatorship' of experience which suggest themselves as new literacy practices in this work entail the merging of many skills and attributes into one, all of which involve being literate and functioning in new media as readers as well as producers and authors. They also imply a means of being able to work and assemble assets *intertextually*, to know how they speak or relate to one another in the meanings which are made. For some, the interest here lies in the design for social action, how meaning is

made from the resources *multimodally* (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001). For others, this is a partial understanding of the processes of engagement and affect and it means adding embodied and aesthetic responses to our interpretation of how meaning is made in social media (Leander and Frank, 2006). In all cases, the whole composition is being made from the accumulated assets of experience and habitus (Bourdieu, 1986), and from those selected aspects which are both ‘transient’ and ‘anchored’ affiliations and markers of identity (Merchant, 2005).

As we saw at the beginning of the chapter, ‘curating’ is a word which captures this as an essentially agentic process, applied in this instance to online spaces. It incorporates and suggests at least the following: *collecting, cataloguing, arranging and assembling for exhibition, displaying, interpreting*. The children in the playground games research were aware of *collecting* on many levels, from their engagement with a project involving archiving in partnership with a famous cultural institution, through to the deep ethnographic documentation of their own present day games and pastimes which they knew was occurring throughout the project. Each textual resource or recorded artefact, the collected item, whether self produced or not, comes to be allocated its place in the overall collection for the project and their witnessing of this process and their eventual involvement in a key public outcome may have made the children more aware retrospectively of their participation in a curatorial project.

As the children knew from the outset, it was important to develop a common language for talking about the games and for arranging them and the project attempted to engage them fully through the pupil councils in both settings. Naming, tagging, sorting, as discussed earlier, have all been noted as areas for potential development as both skill sets and resources in educational settings, developing learners’ capacity for working with user-generated tagging systems or ‘folksonomies’ (see Davies and Merchant, 2007). As we have seen, the children exploited the game categories in their web designs and operationalised these in their navigational metaphors and menus.

The *arranging* and *assembling* aspects of curatorship are those of planning for elements to be in dialogue with one another, to suggest specific meanings by their location and juxtaposition on the screen, in the design when it is complete. This is an active process of working with intertextuality, using the tools in the software to assemble a coherent whole in a design, exploiting salience, information-handling and framing (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006). Miller’s (2008) ‘integrity of connections’ is an important related concept because it suggests a set of organising principles albeit one dictated by the form of new

media production under consideration. For a digital video production, the resources are gathered and mixed multimodally to make meaning through a time-based text - in the kineikonic mode (Burn and Parker, 2003). In the case of the co-curated webspace, the design of the screen has its own conventions, the breaking of which results in incoherence and lack of a viable representational form. In many cases, the children's designs reveal a concern that the experience for visitors should be coherent and navigable through their sophisticated use of metaphor and movement.

At the same time, there was a sense throughout of the locus of control in these processes not always being located wholly with the children but rather negotiated and reinterpreted in the context of the wider adult-led research team, British Library staff, web designers and other collaborators. They knew, for example, that they were – to an extent - guardians of people's recorded experience of an aspect of their cultural life, in a space for which they were only partially responsible, for a very wide audience of unseen and unknown visitors. Having been invited to help organize the public representational spaces for these games, they had to negotiate their relationship to the playground games as *historically* handed down. It's possible that this initiated an awareness of the place of their own games in the contested and curated spaces of recorded culture for the future. In this, of course, they were aided and abetted by the library staff and researchers to whom they offered their own nascent ability as curators in new media in the designs which they produced.

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