Curiouser & Curiouser

Book Bytes -- Exploring the Computer Connection

Rebecca McMahon Giles

Rebecca McMahon Giles, a former elementary teacher, has been a member of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of South Alabama since 1998, where she teaches an elementary methods course.

From cell phones to palm pilots, technology has permeated every aspect of our daily lives, resulting in a society of young people who are more Internet savvy and technologically advanced than any previous generation. Parents' concern that their children are watching too much television has been replaced by the fear that they are spending too much time in front of the computer. Although the allure of a flickering screen is understandably strong, no digital creation or cyberspace conversation can replace the irresistible appeal of quality literature. The time-honored tradition of snuggling up with a good book has been a socially acceptable and highly enjoyable pasttime throughout the ages. Having withstood countless natural disasters and several world wars, books are here to stay!

Rather than replacing recreational reading, computer technology has expanded our literary selections to include an array of modern choices. The books suggested below are aimed at renewing the reading habits of our keyboarding youngsters by capitalizing on their interest in and fascination with computer technology. Generation "Y-ers" are sure to approve of these contemporary choices.


As the series opens, a seemingly innocent birthday present actually turns out to be more than the used laptop computer it first appears to be. When Jack, Loaf, and Merle accidentally connect to the intergalactic Internet via a lost Server, they discover that the evil Tyrant and his henchmen (the FOES) are trying to take over the Outernet to use its powers to control the galaxy. They quickly consider their options--vaporize their enemies, make a fortune in intergalactic travel, or rescue the Galaxy from evil. In their attempt to keep freedom and liberty in the Galaxy, our heroes are assisted (and often hindered) by a hilarious dog and cat team who are disguised as agents of the Friends and the FOES. Sci-fi fans will read this book at warp speed and be anxious to complete the series, which includes Control, Odyssey, Time Out, and The Hunt.


In the age of reality shows comes The Contest in which three children compete inside a personal computer. From the catchy beginning through a suspenseful plot to the climactic ending, this book is a true page-turner. An added bonus to the intriguing storyline is the opportunity to see the inner workings of a PC.


Having discovered at age 16 that he was adopted, Andy begins a computer search for his biological parents. Andy's quest and the unexpected outcome are related in a tale of mystery and suspense with characters that appeal to its targeted teenage audience.


This novel in e-mail messages continues the story of long-distance friends Elizabeth and Tara*Starr, which was begun in P.S. Longer Letter Later (1999) following Tara*Starr's move to Ohio. After enduring an entire year of communication through the U.S. postal service, these two teenage girls with very differing personalities enter the 21st century with a more expedient means of corresponding. Almost every issue faced by teenagers (boys and girls alike) is chronicled in this honest, unpredictable, and oh-so-current look at growing up in today's modern age.


At the suggestion of their dads, Guy and Annabelle become e-pals. These two British teens soon make enough personal revelations through their cyberspace correspondence to form a special bond. Their joint imagining leads to wild suppositions regarding their parents shared past which makes for amusing reading.


Forst and Patterson provide a humorous foray into (literally) the World Wide Web as their comical animal characters are accidentally transported inside a computer. This fantasy tale provides the catalyst for considering the possibility of cyberspace travel while offering a fast-paced and enjoyable read. Many readers are asking if there will a sequel, as the title implies.

book awards lists from a variety of print and Internet sources. Encouraging recreational reading among children and adolescents. Acclaim—a valuable asset when one realizes that peer recommendation is known as the most effective means of the narrative of other selections. Although not award-winning literature, all of these books have received high reader information regarding the personal computer (Cyberspace). Both More In addition to the common technology content, these books possess a number of appealing features. In this sequel to "Land of the Internet." Implications for future generations. The companion website offers readers a tangible entrance to the wealth of information related to the Internet, including its history, how it operates, and some possible computer and deliver our mail, from evil. Embedded within this exciting and suspenseful tale is a humorous, fast-paced journey. Science fiction enthusiasts should keep an eye out for the sequel Peck alludes to in the final scene. This book continues the adventures of computer savvy middle-schoolers Josh Leis and Aaron Zimmer, first introduced in Lost in Cyberspace (Demco Media, 1997), who unintentionally create a wish-granting machine that allows cyberspace travel. Although it has a slow start, the entrance of a mysterious spy known as the Watcher jumps the plot. The author's use of humor throughout makes this an enjoyable read. Science fiction enthusiasts should keep an eye out for the sequel Peck alludes to in the final scene. A tale of friendship between Skip Mousely and his deaf friend Josh. These two boys learn about life and computers as they establish Critter Junction's first computer user's group. The accompanying disk, which includes MemoCards Light, Kid Pix, Bricks Plus, Hangman Plus, and Spacestation Pheta, allows readers to hone their technological skills along with their reading comprehension. After twelve-year-old Mitchell's summer prank leads to an elderly woman's injury, he must make amends by chatting online with a nursing home resident, Wootie Hayes, twice a week. Although Mitch isn't thrilled with his "sentence," this unlikely pair soon develop a meaningful friendship and are able to help each other face reality as they communicate through a series of electronic conversations. When Jessica tires of defeating mutant gophers with an arsenal of various deadly weapons (the objective of her current computer game), she jumps at Matt's suggestion to visit a new game site, go4.com. Jess and Matt are soon propelled into a wacky virtual world where literary legends and video games meet. Their quest for the evil mastermind behind this crazy combination makes for a humorous, fast-paced journey. This coming of age story, written entirely in e-mails, focuses on the long-distance friendship between two young girls. Sarah, a wealthy Manhattan socialite who suddenly finds herself living on her sister's Michigan farm, uses the computer to maintain contact with her best friend Katie in New York. The gradual changes in Sarah brought about by the trials of her new, rural environment are revealed in a believable and entertaining manner. Readers, being typical nineties kids, will soon feel the urge to e-mail Sarah themselves, and they can use the accompanying webpage! This fantasy-filled adventure story chronicles E-Wally's efforts to deliver the e-people, who live inside the computer and deliver our mail, from evil. Embedded within this exciting and suspenseful tale is a wealth of information related to the Internet, including its history, how it operates, and some possible implications for future generations. The companion website offers readers a tangible entrance to the "Land of the Internet." In this sequel to the Great Good Thing (2001), Princess Sylvie's adventure story is uploaded onto the World Wide Web, creating a host of modern-day dilemmas related to the abundance of new readers. Sylvie soon ventures into a virtual world where she attempts to overcome everything from stress to the threat of extinction. In addition to the common technology content, these books possess a number of appealing features. Snail Mail No More, From E to You and Sarah's Page offer the refreshing style and modern format of a novel written in emails. Both Pippin and Peanut: The Adventure Begins and The Great Interactive Dream Machine: Another Adventure in Cyberspace offer a light, laughter-filled read thanks to the authors' use of humor throughout, while factual information regarding the personal computer (The Contest) and the Internet (E-Wally and the Quest) accompanies the narrative of other selections. Although not award-winning literature, all of these books have received high reader acclaim—a valuable asset when one realizes that peer recommendation is known as the most effective means of encouraging recreational reading among children and adolescents.

Web Connections

The Children's Literature Web Guide at http://www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown/ is maintained by librarian David K. Brown, who attempts to lure viewers away from the Internet and back to book themselves by (1) assembling and categorizing the growing number of Internet sources related to books for children and young adults and (2) compiling book awards lists from a variety of print and Internet sources.
The Children's Book Council is a non-profit trade organization dedicated to encouraging literacy and the use and enjoyment of children's books. By visiting their homepage at http://www.cbcbooks.org/ viewers can find information about authors and illustrator, sneak a peak at the newest titles recently published, or take an in-depth look at showcase books.

Designed for educators, the Carol Hurst's Children's Literature Site at http://www.carolhurst.com/ offers a collection of reviews of great books for kids and ideas of ways to use them as well as collections of books and activities about particular subjects, curriculum areas, themes and professional topics.

Teenreads at http://www.teenreads.com/ is the companion site to Kidsreads and is designed especially for young adult readers. It offers a look at "Cool New Books" along with reviews of current releases, author profiles, and "Book Club Guides." Visitor input is solicited through the "Question of the Month" feature.

Of the websites recommended, the Children's Literature Web Guide (CLWG), is the most diverse in its offerings. While the Children's Book Council and Carol Hurst's Children's Literature Site (CHCLS) are directed towards educators and librarians, CLWG boasts an audience of teachers, librarians, parents, and children, as well as book professionals. CLWG's easy-to-navigate homepage provides numerous links to related sites (although some need to be updated) and contains such highlights as The Web Travelers Toolkit: Essential Kid Lit Websites, which connects surfers to CHCLS, among other sites. The fourth site suggested, Teenreads, was actually found via CLWG and is only one example of the many doors this site opens.

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