

Deborah Fields Releases Best Practices of Design for Kids | ITLS

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Deborah Fields Releases Best Practices of Design for Kids DIY Media



Where children's creations used to be relegated to refrigerator doors and classroom bulletin boards, they can now be shared with audiences of millions thanks to connected digital technologies. You may be familiar with some of these platforms: DIY.org, Scratch.mit.edu, Storybird.com, GamestarMechanic.com. In fact, there are hundreds of websites where kids can share things that they make—whether concrete projects or digital designs—and where they can give and receive comments, highlight things they like and even create networks based on other creators they want to follow. This is not your typical social networking, this is DIY- (Do-It-Yourself) based social networking that is interest-driven and focused on sharing what you make.

Thanks to a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (2013-2018), Dr. Deborah Fields, research professor in Utah State University's Instructional Technologies & Learning Sciences department, and her Canadian colleague from the University of Toronto Dr. Sara Grimes, created the [Kids DIY Media Partnership](#). Through this collaboration, they have been able to study how and where children create and share DIY media and examine the designs,

regulations, infrastructures and technologies that underpin the platforms kids use.

"So many parties are concerned about safety, bullying and legal issues about protecting children, that little attention is paid to the actual designs for engaging children online," Fields said.

Fields and Grimes spent five years studying and comparing the English-speaking websites where children share what they create. With a few remarkable exceptions, most website designs were very impoverished, offering few opportunities for sharing, commenting, leading or even being able to see other children's work.

"Imagine creating something and never being able to see what other people have made or how they made it - or no one else being able to see what you made" Fields said. "Sharing and seeing other people's work is so key to creativity!"

The work that Fields and Grimes did, which involved several ITLS graduate students, is now available to all in their [Best Practices for Design](#) document just released at the Connected Learning Summit at the University of California, Irvine in September. It is available at <http://tinyurl.com/kidsdiymedia>. The focused, five-minute "Ignite" talk that Fields gave at the summit was the final talk at the conference and is available [here on YouTube](#).

Their focus was on exploring the opportunities and challenges associated with kids' DIY media, and with finding ways to best foster a rights-based, inclusive, child-centric approach to children's online media-making and sharing. Working with Canadian and American academics, designers, media producers, child advocates, educators and NGOs, Fields and Grimes identified many strengths in the kids' DIY media landscape. They also spotted some areas for improvement.

The [Best Practices for Design](#) document highlights the themes of five years of work across academic, design, policy and children's domains written for broad public consumption by those who design for and create policies that affect children's DIY activities online. It includes ways to improve creation, sharing, collaboration, civic engagement, self-representation, and education as well as legal concerns such as child-friendly privacy policies and copyright regulations and how platforms can be child-friendly and age-appropriate.