

ChLA Quarterly Special Issue Call for Papers:

The concept of virtual worlds, while not new, has become a normalized part of 21st-century consciousness in the wake of the worldwide novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Once a realm reserved for playful escape, “dissolv[ing] the constraints of the anchored world so that we can lift anchor—not to drift aimlessly without point, but to explore anchorage in ever-new places” (Heim, 1993), virtual spaces have taken center stage in our everyday lives. Our meeting places, our workplaces, our places of learning, even the places where we unite to break bread have shifted from the physical realm to the virtual. Children in particular have felt the seismic cultural shift from in-person to virtual interaction, as it has fundamentally changed the way they play, learn, and grow. Contemporary saturation with virtual reality, lamentable or praiseworthy, nevertheless gives us an opportunity to collectively interrogate virtuality. The special issue will examine the multifaceted directives, experiences, and routes of access to the virtual, as well as responses from children’s literature and media, contemporary and historical, to virtual spaces, and representations of the virtual in works for young people.

The call presented invites essays (broadly construed) considering a panoply of views on virtual reality, coalesced through the lens of children’s and young adult media criticism.

Possible topics include but are not limited to:

- Play in virtual spaces
- Work in virtual spaces
- Community and intimacy in virtual spaces
- Synthesizing shared realities/virtual as shared experience
- How virtual spaces are constructed/deconstructed, imbued with/ rendered devoid of meaning, reflective of/antithetical to reality
- Socioeconomic pressures exerted upon virtual spaces, particularly with regards to technological access
- Virtual pedagogical practices
- Concerns/critiques/analyses of virtual pedagogy and related issues, including engagement, achievement, and retention
- Virtual media artifacts, including literature, games, and experiences
- The avatar in virtual space
- Cognitive embodiment, real-as-virtual
- Colonization/decolonization of, in, or through virtual space

- Depictions of virtual reality in children's/YA media
- Communities of concern and virtual intervention
- Novel uses of virtual space as interventional mechanisms (such as libraries, music outreach, tutoring, and beyond)
- Theory of the virtual
- Historical precursors to/ analogues for the virtual (such as fantasy realms, imagined communities and spaces, mental/inner worlds, and others)
- Boundaries and transgressions between "real" and "virtual"
- Childhood as virtual space
- Virtual space in primarily visual media
- Virtual remediation/transmediation/creation
- Critical making

Special preference will be given to essays that consider marginalized groups, including but not limited to communities of color, LGBTQIA+ communities, indigenous communities, ethnic communities, and people with disabilities. Scholars from these communities may self-identify if they so choose, but self-identification is not required.

Papers should conform to the standard style of the CHLAQ (available [here](#)) and be between 5,000 and 6,000 words in length. Please send questions and completed essays to Kyle Eveleth (eveleth1@otterbein.edu) with "CHLAQ Essay" in the subject line. Essays must be submitted by November 1, 2022. High-quality submissions that are not included in the special issue can be considered for future issues of the Children's Literature Association Quarterly.