

## **Virtual Prestige: The Cultural Capital and Material Impact of Children's E-book Awards**

In the midst of the burgeoning critical interest in the field of children's book awards, including Kenneth Kidd and Joseph Thomas's excellent 2017 edited collection, *Prizing Children's Literature: The Cultural Politics of Children's Book Awards*, this presentation will consider both the emergent critical and material impact of children's e-book awards. While the critical-material impact of winning the Newbery or Caldecott Medal is truly staggering, this is contrasted by the sense of ephemera and disregard surrounding awards for original children's e-books and book apps, representing one of the most problematic and marginalized (as well as one of the most interesting) considerations within children's book awards. Much as June Cummins suggests that the Newbery Medal is an "identity-based" award, the major American Library Association awards offer an interesting set of identity politics with respect to material form. Both the Newbery and Caldecott guidelines, for example, insist that a text under consideration must be "a self-contained entity, not dependent on other media," thereby questioning the place of the digital humanities at the highest level of children's literature. In lieu of a definitive e-book award to provide a standard for the field, the proliferation of children's e-book awards have gravitated in one of three directions: digital awards that adhere largely to the Newbery and Caldecott content guidelines (i.e. for traditional books that happened to be published digitally), awards for digital texts that could not be considered as conventional books, and unregulated promotional awards aimed solely at the marketing and sales of self-published e-texts. This presentation considers what the Newbery's and the Caldecott's consideration of e-texts would mean for their cultural prestige and critical legitimacy, as well as whether a children's choice award system might have a material impact on e-books that it generally lacks with conventional children's books. While children's book awards have traditionally worked in favor of the material perpetuation and publication of children's books, the field of prizing likewise represents one of the most serious impending battlegrounds for the ongoing material/digital competition within children's literature.