Learning with Anne:

Early Childhood Education Looks at New Media for Young Girls

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Here, too, the ethical responsibility of the school on the social side must be

interpreted in the broadest and freest spirit; it is equivalent to that training of the

child which will give him such possession of himself that he may take charge of

himself; may not only adapt himself to the changes that are going on, but have

power to shape and direct them.

-- John Dewey[1]

In L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Avonlea* (1909), sixteen-year-old Anne Shirley articulates

a progressive pedagogical attitude that seems to coincide with Dewey's *Moral Principles*

in Education, published the same year: 'No, if I can't get along without whipping I shall

not try to teach school. There are better ways of managing. I shall try to win my pupils'

affections and then they will *want* to do what I tell them.'[2] Drawing from her own

childhood experience depicted in *Anne of Green Gables*, fledgling teacher Anne

describes a schooling experience that would treat the student as she once wished to be

treated. As a child, Anne embodied the model of a self-directed learner who actively

engaged with her physical and social environment, making meaning and constructing her

own identity and understanding of the world, indeed creating a world in which she could

live. As a student and a teacher growing into adulthood, the older Anne exemplifies both romantic and progressive attitudes towards social relationships and learning that are governed by both her imagination and her determined self-confidence. Many readers who have come to love Anne for who she is, what she does, or how she views the world are inculcated to this perspective, and some even take on the moniker of 'kindred spirits' to signify a covenant among aficionados.

Anne Shirley and Emily Byrd Starr continue to be cited as exemplars of both appropriate conduct and subversive practice by fans involved in the many Anne- and Emily-related popular culture practices of the twenty-first century. Not only how Anne and Emily are seen, but how they see themselves and the codes and rules they try to live by have been leveraged for diverse educational and commercial purposes. Anne and Emily's stories, primarily in *Anne of Green Gables* and in *Emily of New Moon* (1923), are very much in the tradition of the *bildungsroman*, as scholars have noted: both are stories of becoming where the narratives follow the heroine's growth and development through her girlhood.[3] As Brenda Weber, a self-confessed 'Anne fan with an academic bent,' notes: 'These two characters offer the reader models comparable to the models my grandmother offered me. Anne and Emily are interested, eager, questioning -- the very qualities we try to instill in our students in literature courses.'[4] The desire to become Anne or Emily is as much an educational act with its own peculiar pedagogy and curriculum as it is an act of imaginative (re)creation of self and identity. These educational and imaginative processes are themselves open to manipulation and influence by agents external to the relationship between the reader and the protagonist, in this case, by the new media industry that finds the affinity of Montgomery's audience so attractive.

As we enter the second centennial of the publication of the novel *Anne of Green Gables*, several new social networking websites have invited girls to learn with Anne and through Anne. Anne's Diary, located at http://annesdiary.com/, invites girls aged six to fourteen to socialize online and 'keep a top-secret virtual Diary' within a safe environment that they refer to as 'An innovative, fun and educational space in which girls can communicate with their peers and improve their creative writing and reading skills.'[5] New Moon Girls, located at http://www.newmoon.com/, similarly markets itself as 'Safe. Educational. Advertising-Free' by inviting girls to 'develop their full potential through self-discovery, creativity, and community in an environment designed to build self-esteem and promote positive body image in the important tween years.'[6] Also marketed as a learning tool is Sullivan Entertainment's *Anne of Green Gables: The Animated Series*, a twenty-six-episode series for five- to nine-year-old viewers that first aired on PBS and TVO in 2000-2001. The back cover of a boxed set of three DVDs comprising six episodes of the series proclaims: 'Anne's out of control imagination leads her through adventures which demonstrate important lessons in loyalty, resolving conflict and problem solving.'[7] Sullivan's animated Anne, Anne's Diary, and New Moon Girls are three examples of how characters and themes from Montgomery's work have been taken up as loci for formal and informal learning, through the identification of Anne variously as a marketing icon and as an ideal young girl, as well as through the way Montgomery constructed learning environments within her novels.

An exploration of new media through the lens of Early Childhood Education reveals an important interplay and tension: on the one hand is the pull of the curriculum and pedagogy that Montgomery encoded into the novels; on the other is the powerful

push of the educational and business goals of twenty-first-century commercial websites. These new media sites offer legitimate locations where young girls are invited to engage with each other and, in doing so, potentially subvert the commercial and social restrictions placed by adults on these 'safe spaces' for girls to interact, as Sara Grimes suggests in her discussion of online communities for girls. [8] More specifically, this chapter maps the curriculum and pedagogy that Montgomery infused into *Anne of Green Gables* and *Emily of New Moon* in order to explore how the fiction is translated into the educational agendas of Anne- and Emily-inspired new media and social technologies amid the competing goals of media creators, content providers, and the young fans of all things Anne. While Montgomery wrote for both young people *and* adults, the focus of this chapter is specifically on the kinds of pedagogy that these media sites offer through young readers' engagement of Anne and Emily (including readers too young to have read the novels), an area of exploration that has not been considered thoroughly. [9]

This chapter ultimately hopes to open up a new field of investigation at the intersection of Early Childhood Education, New Media Studies and L.M. Montgomery Studies by beginning to explore the following research questions: What kinds of learning experiences are possible in these commercial networking sites, and what is the educational experience when young fans visit these locations and join these communities? How is *Anne-ness* -- Anne's global appeal, her creative, good-natured enthusiasm and vitality, and her embodiment of traditional moral and cultural values -- harnessed and packaged into a commodity that can be marketed and leveraged for commercial gain?

Anne of Green Gables social networking sites provide us with a girl's-eye view of

the world that is usually shared with kindred spirits and perhaps a locked diary. The content is personal and private, yet involves many very public and social events. As intriguing as it is to peak behind the doors to see exactly what these girls are doing and sharing, how they are co-constructing identity and voice through their writing and shared activities, these sites are not public, in the way that much of the web is. Access is restricted to participants and parents. A research project is presently underway to study the cross-talk between these kinds of environments and I hope that there will be some discussion about what goes on behind closed doors. For now, the diaries and stories are locked away from our view, and we must search for clues in the margins and by peeking through the cracks, and look to research in other locations that are more public to give us hints as to what might be going on when we learn with Anne online. Fortunately, the locations are themselves learning environments, and we can explore their structure and shape, as well as the ideas behind their design, to unpack the kinds of learning that are implicitly and explicitly presented to participants.

Situating Early Childhood Educational Perspectives

L.M. Montgomery had a keen interest in childhood education, as scholars have noted. Irene Gammel and Ann Dutton have shed light on formal learning (or schooling), suggesting that Montgomery drew on her own experiences both as a humiliated student and as an idealistic teacher to reveal a complex interplay between pedagogical ideals and practical realities, though they also note that the young teacher Montgomery acknowledged her experience with the 'rod and rule.'[10] Aware of how adults used and abused power in learning contexts, Montgomery's fiction 'argues for a space of

imaginative freedom within the disciplinary boundaries of school life, allowing the rebellious child to push against the boundaries of rigid conventions.'[11] As a one-time one-room schoolteacher, a longtime Sunday School teacher, a writer of fiction about childhood, and a mother of two sons, Montgomery kept herself well informed regarding prevalent trends and theories in child development and learning. In 'Marigold and the Magic of Memory,' Elizabeth Waterston identifies the educational models and theories that influenced the later Montgomery, ranging from Friedrich Froebel's nineteenth-century idealistic philosophy of the 'kindergarten' to the more social and practical notions of twentieth-century education philosophy found in the works of John Dewey and Maria Montessori. In Canada, Dewey's ideas were promoted within the context of eugenics by Helen MacMurchy, Chief of the Division of Child Welfare in the Dominion Department of Health and author of the popular *The Almosts: A Study of the Feeble-Minded* (1920). Not only was MacMurchy a friend of Montgomery, but her sister Marjorie MacMurchy's novel *The Child's House* (1923) has marked similarities to Montgomery's novel *Magic for Marigold* (1929).[12] The later Montgomery was also aware of William Blatz's influence on developmental psychology at the Institute of Child Studies at the University of Toronto with its emphasis on children's creativity and self-discovery within a social context, and the general interest in play, emotions, and the imagination, as opposed to heredity. These, along with popular works of fiction for children such as those by A.A. Milne (best known for *Winnie-the-Pooh*, published in 1926), ensured that Montgomery was well versed in the variety of perspectives on child development that surface throughout her fiction.[13] Not only did this understanding make a mark on most of her novels, but it has been incorporated into various adaptations of

Montgomery's work for television and new media audiences.

For educational theorists learning is part of our lived experience, a primarily social act that is formally institutionalized in schools. In fact, most of what we learn comes from our interactions with others in our lives, or from various cultural artifacts we encounter such as books, music, film, the arts, *and* online media, as well as through our experiences within cultural and religious communities and sporting events. What is also important to recognize is that shopping malls and public parks, businesses and workplaces, and even the Internet have a curriculum to be learned and a pedagogy that outlines how we interact with and within them. These are often called 'informal learning environments.'[14] In *Life in Classrooms* (1968), Phillip Jackson first described the learning that takes place outside the classroom by coining the term 'the hidden curriculum,' initiating an inquiry into the kinds of learning that children were experiencing beyond the formal teacher/student interaction.[15] Elliot Eisner later extended Jackson's thinking when he described 'explicit,' 'hidden,' and 'null' curricula that make up learning.[16] The explicit curriculum is what we are taught while having awareness of being taught, such as school knowledge, whereas the hidden curriculum, or what we learn without that awareness, may include social norms and attitudes as well as skills that we pick up as we interact with others. The null curriculum is that which is not taught because it is pushed aside by the explicit and hidden curricula; while it is often unacknowledged, it is as important for our understanding as the other learning choices and experiences we engage in. The locations of learning themselves represent both hidden and null curricula. Their features and affordances need to be explored and documented as learning environments, before we move on to inquire into the actual activities and interactions

participants engage in.

Educational theorists such as John Dewey, Jean Piaget, and Lev Vygotstky have identified what is now generally known as 'social constructivist' aspects of learning -- the premise that learning is situated in social interactions and mediated through language and communication.[17] Combining this notion with both the understanding that 'informal learning environments' and opportunities surround us throughout our lives, and that there are explicit, hidden, and null curricula involved at every step, educators quickly realize that the social world that children grow up in is a political arena. Not only do Montgomery's fictional constructions of Anne Shirley and Avonlea or Emily and New Moon draw readers into the narrative, but they claim to teach readers how to live, how to learn, and how to interact with each other. Montgomery's Scottish Presbyterian values, rooted in the island culture of P.E.I. and overlaid with Sunday school values drawn from Canadian and American magazines and newspapers, inform and influence readers' own values thousands of miles away and even decades later. Recognizing this influence, we can now turn our attention to modern re-imaginings of Anne in new media, probing their stated pedagogical agendas. To discover what kinds of learning these environments afford, we probe the explicit, hidden and null curriculum opportunities they offer.

Anne's Diary and Biometric Scanning

Because young readers of the twenty-first century get to know Anne in all her manifestations, including movies, television series, and new media, their relationship with Anne involves an informal learning environment in which Anne's life and experience form a heuristic lens through which experience is shaped and new knowledge

is constructed in the individual.[18] This learning often results in the shared or co-construction of knowledge when individuals participate in online and face-to-face communities that focus on kindred experiences and activities. Anne's Diary – like New Moon Girls and Sullivan's animated Anne discussed below – situates itself within the context of informal learning. This popular online learning site highlights how the interactive social networking, shared community experiences, and identity construction opportunities that are the hallmark of social networking and online learning environments, are marketed to young girls and their families as engaging educational sites that are safe and fun.

As a social networking site Anne's Diary is a form of computer-mediated communication consisting of a series of tools or features that allow girls to interact and share information of interest to them. The main headings are PLAY, DISCOVER, MEMBERS, VIDEO and SHOP, with the following subsections:

- PLAY: GAMES, PET'S CORNER, E-CARDS, FUN HOUSE, WALLPAPER, QUIZZES
- DISCOVER: COMPUTER SAVVY, EMPOWERMENT, HOMEWORK HELP, ONLINE SAFETY, BOOK CLUB
- MEMBERS: PARENTS LOGIN, REGISTER, SAFETY FORUM, HELP, GETTING STARTED
- VIDEO (introductory video of how Anne's Diary operates)
- SHOP: BOOKS, DVDS, MUSIC, ART GALLERY, COLLECTIBLES, SPECIALS

Activities that do not allow communication among members are free. The games (DRESS UP, MAKEOVER, FASHION, DOLL MAKER, ROOM DECORATING, BARBIE) appear to be part of Arcade Dressup.com,[19] as that is where the REGISTER link on the games takes the viewer. Anne's Diary is intended to block access by individuals outside of the intended

demographic, and so it is difficult to obtain information as to the discourse of the community and the kinds of activities girls find interesting and which are dormant. In fact, in order to keep the site private, Dolphin Digital Media, which owns the site, uses a biometric scanning (finger printing) to identify members, a controversial new online safety measure.

ANNE'S DIARY VIDEO, found under the registration subsection of the MEMBERS and REGISTER headings, provides the best description of what Anne's Diary offers. A cheery voiced character with red hair, braids, a straw hat, in a brown print dress over a green shirt welcomes the viewer with 'Hi. Welcome to Anne's Diary. Hello. I'm Anne. Wanna see my room? Follow me!' at which point she places her index finger on a button under the text SCAN FINGER which changes to ACCESS GRANTED. She goes on to point to 'all [her] stuff' and her magical diary, in which she can write but can also talk to her friends around the world in a 'safe chatroom.' She shares pictures taken with her friend Diana and enters her stories into contests. Anne lauds the fact that she can talk to anyone and do anything 'because the room is completely safe,' explaining the identity verification and fingerprinting process, information storage (the depiction of a boy being denied access to the site is shown at this point).[20]

The striking elements of Anne's Diary lie in how it integrates free and commercial external materials and in the rationale and technology for isolating communication and interactions and for how these elements function within the context of the image of Anne in Montgomery's novel. The key issues of Anne's Diary appear to be twofold: first, to identify marketing opportunities and product tie-ins; and second, to test the waters with biometric scanning in social networking contexts. The marketing

opportunities and product tie-ins are similar to what Grace Chung and Sara Grimes describe in other online media when they note: 'many popular children's sites are often commercially owned and operated, responding primarily to advertiser demands and other corporate interests … This relationship is clearly illustrated within popular branded children's online game communities, such as Neopets.com, EverythingGirl.com, and Postopia.com. While these sites provide young users with hours of entertainment and endless online play opportunities, they simultaneously engage them in data mining activities that transform children's play into a way of gathering information.'[21] In this case, the tie-ins are primarily to Sullivan Entertainment media, with the majority of links going to the Sullivan Boutique site, where members can purchase everything from books, CDs, and DVDs to dolls, furniture, and stationery.[22] This is not novel, as Mickey Mouse, Barbie and My Little Pony all have product-based websites.[23] Anne's Diary's parent company, Dolphin Digital Media, is responsible for the *Zoey 101* and *Ned's Declassified School Survival Guide* brands on Nickelodeon.[24]

Anne's Diary has as its explicit primary focus the facilitation of giving voice to their members and the sharing of ideas, options, and personally constructed narratives within the context of a same-sex, similarly-aged community demographic. The premise of the site is that providing a paradigm of youth communication and activity that is based on the familiar Anne narrative will in turn motivate and empower girls to construct and share their own stories, ideas and interests. In other words, the site provides an example that its users are encouraged to emulate and extend in their own ways. An important feature of Anne's Diary is that it promises to ensure that this kind of personal storytelling takes place within a safe setting.

To do so, however, Anne's Diary has chosen a user authentication system using biometric scanning as their form of safety, whereby the technological 'fix' abdicates adult participation in the community, leaving little opportunity for the kind of mentoring experiences found in L.M. Montgomery's work. The technology is suited to large-scale deployment for very large communities where it is impossible to watch for inappropriate communication, but it also assumes that children are not capable of inappropriate communication and that adults are the only risk factors. Opportunities for guidance from more experienced members of the community who have outgrown the intended demographic yet who can now take on mentoring roles are lost.

In fact, the issue of biometric scanning in social networking contexts requires closer investigation. According to the site, 'Anne's Diary has partnered with Fujitsu Microelectronics and 123ID to provide biometric login kits for fingerprint authentication that replaces password authentication.'[25] This partnership appears to be the first to attempt to initiate children into a culture of seeing the use of biometric scanning as part of their lived experience. In a post-9/11 world of global anxiety, with the added fears that every child is at risk from Internet predation that apparently makes even the private home unsafe, some parents may feel that surrendering the most fundamental mark of identity to a commercial media corporation is a reasonable price to pay for the illusion of safety it provides.[26] Anne's Diary appears to be predicated on this two-pronged experiment in social media as a marketing tool.

One cannot help but think that adults monitoring communication would have a much greater chance of identifying inappropriate communication, especially since even the supposedly safe environment provided by the new technology appears to be fallible,

as, according to newspaper reports in January 2009, a Korean woman successfully fooled biometric scanners at a Japanese airport.[27] Ultimately, Anne's Diary creates a Panopticon, a system of supervision that is both omnipresent and unknowable.[28] Once the authorities have collected and authorized a girl's identity and it has been stored online, the collected information is used to control access to the community, at which point the invisible hand of authority withdraws. The user has her own private *virtual* bedroom, where she can keep her journal, upload media, and chat with friends, all of whom have been authenticated, finger-printed, and authorized by one of the listed sponsors.[29] The entire system appears designed to minimize the opportunities for the kind of rebellion that is at the core of Anne's personality in the novel.

In fact, there does not appear to be much inherent allegiance or kinship to Anne herself, beyond her recognition value as a precocious little girl with red hair. While there is passing reference to *Anne of Green Gables* on the site's 'About us' page (which is aimed at adults), Anne's Diary makes few further attempts to connect its users to the literature the site is inspired by. In that sense, Anne is used less as a literary reference point than as a paradigm of the tween 'everygirl,' an easy signpost for expressive and self-referential girls. This detachment from Anne does not diminish any of the putative value Anne's Diary may have as a social networking tool for young girls, but may even enhance it by nullifying potential thematic or conceptual constraints that close adherence to the Montgomery texts may confer.

New Moon Girls and Pedagogical Value

In *Negotiating Critical Literacies with Young Children* (2004), Vivian Mara Vasques

argues that even for the very young there is a need to be engaged in a dialogue on issues that are important to children and in a manner that allows them to start making critical and ethical choices as a foundation for meaning-making and learning. Consequently, there is a need to recognize that playful social interaction among Anne fans is also a pedagogical or learning act with long-term implications on development that may be far from innocent.[30] Although Montgomery did not write exclusively *for* children, her work has been taken up by adults who are interested in children's learning as a model of the kinds of learning communities they envision. The goals and outcomes are distinctly different, as are the technologies or the communities they support. These are intentional learning communities that girls or their parents/caregivers choose to participate in, as seen above in the case of Anne's Diary. The pedagogy of the locations is particularly interesting in terms of the overlapping, and somewhat conflicting, notions of how they promote or support community formation and identity construction, and take up issues of protection of children, learning, and the commodification of Montgomery-related ideas.

As a social networking site launched in 2007, New Moon Girls, which had its origins as a print magazine, contains a number of features that position it differently from Anne's Diary. According to its website, the objective of New Moon Girls is 'to help girls, ages 8 to 15, discover their unique voices and express them in the world in ways that matter.' The mission statement continues: 'We fulfill our mission by keeping girls at our center. Through active girl involvement and participation in all our business decisions, we provide respectful, creative, energetic and safe communities where girls explore, discover, create, grow and share their voices to make a positive difference in their lives and in the world.'[31] The site is organized into categories that are broken down as follows:

- VOICES: LUNA'S CHATTER BOX, BEAUTIFUL GIRLS, VIDEO AND MUSIC, SHOUT OUT!, ASK A GIRL, DEAR LUNA, MOON GLOW GALLERY, and POETRY.
- FEATURES: CHANGING THE WORLD, BODIES AND FEELINGS, FOR THE CURIOUS, ARTS AND CULTURE, SISTER TO SISTER, and SPOTLIGHT.

New Moon Girls, which ran for over a decade as a print journal before going online, grew out of founder Nancy Gruver's desire to create a safe and nurturing environment for girls. From its beginning, girls had a voice on the New Moon Girls editorial board, while the advisory board was composed of a group of female academics (such as Professor Deborah Tolman, Dr. Harriet S. Mosatche, and Professor Cheryl Dellasega) engaged in issues related to women and girls.[32] There is a strong sense throughout the site that New Moon Girls exists to provide a forum for girls' voices to be heard without interference from commercial media or corporate influence.

New Moon Girls is a commercial venture, however, charging a yearly subscription fee and selling back issues of their print magazine as well as books, T-shirts, and other items emblazoned with messages that celebrate girls' voices and their uniqueness in slogans such as 'Everyone is Beautiful,' 'Be your Dream,' and 'Listen to Girls.'[33] New Moon Girls features a great deal of content that points to Montgomery, Anne, and Emily, highlighting the kinds of deeds and actions that are associated with these literary characters; in this way, the connection to *Anne of Green Gables* is not at all tenuous. However, the over-all thrust of New Moon Girls is not to laud or linger upon Montgomery's creations, but to present the type of girl that Anne or Emily would be interacting and discussing things of interest with, from teen Hollywood singer/actress Hilary Duff to questions of sexuality and social justice. The site's use of Anne and Emily

extends beyond their simple brand values, to encompass a deeper sense of how their inquisitive spirits might manifest themselves in modern-day girls' interests.

Like Anne's Diary, New Moon Girls is a social networking site where girls can communicate with each other, but in contrast to Anne's Diary, New Moon Girls uses a moderated posting format that involves adults to read and check posts for inappropriate content and mentor members about community expectations. New Moon Girls also stands in contrast with Anne's Diary (and Sullivan's *Animated Series* discussed below) as far as their curriculum and pedagogical aims are concerned. New Moon Girls is less about being a fan of Anne-media than it is about emulating the core traits that Montgomery instilled in characters, such as imagination, creativity, courage, confidence, loyalty, ambition, passion, and affection. New Moon Girls locates the power clearly in the girls who visit their site. The fact that New Moon Girls has a 'Girls Editorial Board' solidifies the interrelationship between the governance of the community and the members participating in it.[34] The community structure itself appears to provide opportunities for growth and nurturing built in, and this structure, in turn, evokes the close-knit social structure of the communities in which Montgomery's characters grow up, but without idealizing them or representing them nostalgically. While the content is not wedded to Emily or to Anne, it is specifically the community context that is the link: focusing on shared relationships and experiences among young girls within a larger social context that promotes growth and development of specific ethics and values modeled by older girls and women who take leadership within the community. There's a level of continuity that suggests an intentional modeling of what it means to grow up in a women-centred community context. And as we find in Montgomery's texts, there is a discernable

male presence, but it is found in supportive and administrative roles that are clearly secondary to issues of identity, governance and community.

Anne of Green Gables: The Animated Series

With his proven formula of family values, nostalgia, innocence, wholesomeness, and happiness blended with scenes from Montgomery's novel,[35] Sullivan's interactive DVD *Anne of Green Gables: The Animated Series* also makes explicit statements about its educational values: 'There is so much scope for the imagination,' we are told. Couched in the language of 'madcap adventure,' the marketing text directs attention to a core set of learning values and attitudes:

> Welcome to the world of Avonlea, home to the irrepressible Anne Shirley. Avonlea is an exciting place to live especially as Anne's vivid imagination is always causing havoc for her and her friends. Anne is very, very good at getting herself and others into hot water but always with the best intentions … Join Anne and her friends in each episode as they get into scrapes but recognize the importance of family, friendship and self-confidence.[36]

Due to the inherent limitations of broadcast media, *Anne of Green Gables: The Animated Series* is restricted to more passive observational learning opportunities, though the addition of KIDS COMMENTS and ANNE'S CLUB online shows an attempt to infuse interactive elements into the programs. The DVD identifies features that can be viewed along with the episodes as learning extensions, and points to a website, http://learningwithanne.com/, containing educational information.

A second educational website proclaims Anne a role model because of her 'can-

do' attitude, whose adventures and lessons help children to solve everyday problems and to cope with 'life's ups and downs.'[37] Viewers can learn the lessons contained in the episodes, and there are teacher-driven learning materials on the 'Annetoon Teachers Page' website with its teaching guides to all twenty-six episodes.[38] The Educators Guide boasts standard discussion questions (that are not free of spelling errors, however). Its stated educational objectives are to enrich the viewing experience of its young viewers; to manipulate the knowledge of characters; to sharpen critical viewing skills; and to improve collaborative learning (although it's not entirely clear how collaborative the learning is, given the traditional teacher/student set-up).[39] Discussion is possible through a link to the KINDRED SPIRITS CHAT; this chat, however, is not directed to any specific age group and is basically an open bulletin board for all of Sullivan Entertainment's Anne-related media offerings.[40] In this sense, communication is under the umbrella of a commercial agenda to generate discussion about Sullivan Entertainment's products, rather than being a forum for age-appropriate discussion about the series itself, or an autonomous fansite. There is no mention of or specific linkages to the animated series or discussion of the learning materials that would extend the materials from the 'Annetoon Teachers Page.'

Expanding Children's Horizons

Sullivan Entertainment's animated offering explicitly locates learning within a narrative produced by adults, showing the influence of the Disney model of inculcating family values, and modeling traditional learning practices of the classroom and teacher. Anne's Diary and New Moon Girls chart different paths by both locating discourse within the

child and encouraging the co-construction of narrative and shared meaning through peer-to-peer communication. The location of the discourse resides primarily with the individual and is tied to her interests and experiences, though it is embedded within the larger cultural context of the online communities she visits.[41] By chatting or posting comments or participating in a threaded discussion where girls only have the opportunity to submit their opinions to discussions of interest to them, members of Anne's Diary and New Moon Girls are invited to create and share their own stories and maintain their own narrative spaces in a sustained and reflective manner, one that places them at the centre of the experience, not on the periphery. This gives them the level of control and autonomy over their own narrative spaces that bloggers, for instance, find so appealing.

On one level, Anne's Diary certainly leverages the iconic appeal of Anne developed by Sullivan Entertainment as the marketing strategy to entice participants into a culture of corporate surveillance and product-driven identity construction, wherein Anne models both acquiescence and consumerism. The New Moon Girls site engages Montgomery's world in ways that resonate more fundamentally with her fiction in general including the *Anne* and *Emily* series. They take, as their model, the very notions of community and informal learning that Montgomery describes her heroines experiencing together, and within a larger social context, inviting participants to explore the world collectively beyond the confines of a single cartoonish identity; very much as Montgomery's characters do. In this context, we should also be mindful of Holly Blackford's insights in *Out of this World: Why Literature Matters to Girls,* in which she argues that girls read *beyond* their experiences, turning to literature to connect with experiences that are not necessarily theirs: 'Believing that they open themselves to the

vision of life that a text represents, the girls journey out of this world, a world that, they feel, limits them to one subjective point of view and one realm of experience.' In other words, these Anne inspired sites ultimately have the potential to expand children's horizons, and like the literature discussed by Blackford, afford the child reader the opportunity to move beyond her own experiences and 'to experience something radically different from their everyday lives.'[42]

Ultimately, this essay represents a glimpse at the context and surface features of these three locations in cyberspace, only cracking the surface of examining how all the promised features play themselves out in the hands of the girls who are signing up to share their passions and dreams. Its objective is to explore the foundations and landscapes of these sites in preparation for future research into this virtually unexplored intersection of Childhood Education, New Media Studies, and L.M. Montgomery Studies. More research is required to ascertain not only the diverse ways in which Anne- and Emily-inspired new media provide educational models and life skills for young children, and comprehend more fully how the values that Anne models in the novels work in unison with the technologies in constructing individual and communal identities in the name of Anne. More than this, the goal of future research is also to find out what is really going on inside, the kinds of stories and narratives that are being constructed and shared, the opportunities available and denied, and develop a sense of how participants are maintaining their kindred spirit relationships, if such relationships are in fact possible at all in these mediated spaces.

Notes

[1] Dewey, *Moral Principles in Education*, 8.

[2] LMM, *Anne of Avonlea*, 27.

[3] See Kornfeld and Jackson, 'Female *Bildungsroman*'; Poe, 'Who's Got the Power?'

[4] Weber, 'Confessions of a Kindred Spirit,' 56. See also Ross, 'Readers Reading L.M. Montgomery,' and the reader responses discussed by Irene Gammel and by Åsa Warnqvist in this volume.

[5] 'Anne's Diary: Introduction,' http://www.annesdiary.com/corporate/?m=introduction.

[6] 'New Moon Girls,' http://www.newmoon.com/. Although New Moon Girls does not explicitly associate itself with L.M. Montgomery's work, the combination of its name and its dedication to supporting young girls' 'self-discovery, creativity and community' makes it a kindred spirit enterprise.

[7] *Anne of Green Gables: The Animated Series*, DVD boxed set, 2008. For a complete episode guide, see '*Anne of Green Gables: The Animated Series*,' L.M. Montgomery Research Group, http://lmmresearch.org/filmography/aggas-2000/.

[8] Grimes, 'Kids' Ad Play.'

[9] For earlier studies of Montgomery's spawning of email discussion groups, see Nolan, Lawrence, and Kajihara, 'Montgomery's Island in the Net'; Nolan and Weiss, 'Learning in Cyberspace'; van der Klei, 'Avonlea in Cyberspace.'

[10] Gammel and Dutton, 'Disciplining Development,' 111; see also LMM, 6 December 1894, in *SJ* 1, 125.

[11] Gammel and Dutton, 'Disciplining Development,' 107.

[12] For Montgomery's responses to MacMurchy's novel, see LMM, 2 March 1924, in *SJ* 3, 167.

[13] Waterston, 'Marigold and the Magic'; see also Richard Volpe, 'The History of Child Study and Education at the University of Toronto,' http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/ICS/resources/Hist%20of%20ICS.pdf, 4.

[14] Nolan and Weiss, 'Learning in Cyberspace,' 293.

[15] Jackson, *Life in Classrooms*, 33-35.

[16] Eisner, *Educational Imagination*, 97-103.

[17] See, for instance, Piaget, *Language and Thought*; Vygotstky, *Mind in Society.*

[18] See the Informal Learning Environments Research Group, 'a special interest group within the American Educational Research Association,' at http://www.umsl.edu/~sigiler.

[19] 'Welcome to Arcade Dressup,' http://arcadedressup.com/.

[20] 'Anne's Diary Video,' http://www.annesdiary.com/diary/demos/video/.

[21] Chung and Grimes, 'Data Mining the Kids,' 528.

[22] Sullivan Boutique, http://www.sullivanboutique.com/.

[23] See http://disney.go.com/mickey/, http://barbie.everythinggirl.com/, and http://www.hasbro.com/mylittlepony/, respectively.

[24] Dolphin Digital Media, 'Company Profile,' http://www.dolphindigitalmedia.com/info.php?id=1.

[25] Novell User Communties, 'Success Story: Anne's Diary,' http://www.novell.com/communities/node/2986/success-story-annes-diary/.

[26] Brad Stone, 'Report Calls Online Threats to Children Overblown.' *New York Times*, 14

January 2009,

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/14/technology/internet/14cyberweb.html.

[27] Yomiuri Shimbun, 'S. Korean woman "tricked" airport fingerprint,'

http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/20090101TDY01303.htm.

[28] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 84; Nolan, Mann, and Wellman, 'Sousveillance.'

[29] Anne's Diary, 'Setting New Standards in Online Safety: Who counts as a sponsor?,'

http://www.annesdiary.com/?v =help&cc=193#Sponsor.

[30] For more on ideology and texts for children and what is taught passively about race,

gender roles, the past, community, the family, adult predators, commercial television, and

cyberspace, see Nodelman and Reimer, *Pleasures of Children's Literature*.

[31] 'New Moon Girls,' http://www.newmoon.com/.

[32] New Moon Girls, 'Our Experts,' http://www.newmoon.com/experts/.

[33] 'New Moon Store: Great Gifts for Girls and Women,'

http://www.newmooncatalog.com/default.asp.

[34] Nolan and Weiss, 'Learning in Cyberspace,' 295.

[35] Lefebvre, '*Road to Avonlea*,' 177. See also 'Anne of Green Gables: The Animated

Series,' *Ready to Learn: Wisconsin Public Television* 5, no. 11 (November 2001),

http://www.wpt.org/kids/wipbs/pdf/nov01.pdf. The television series was followed by

Anne: Journey to Green Gables (2005), an animated prequel in the style of Walt Disney's

Cinderella, featuring characters such as Madame Poubelle, who owns the Grout

Orphanage, her henchmen Wilfred and Tupper, and a trusty red squirrel named Bailey.

See '*Anne: Journey to Green Gables*,' L.M. Montgomery Research Group,

http://lmmresearch.org/filmography/ajgg-2005/.

[36] Back cover, *Anne of Green Gables: The Animated Series* DVD, Volume 1.

[37] UNC TV, 'Teachers and Childcare Providers,'

http://www.unctv.org/education/teachers_childcare/workshops/anne.html.

[38] 'Annetoon Teachers Page,' http://www.annetoon.com/teachers.html

[39] Also included on this website are guides for Sullivan Entertainment's live-action

adaptations of Montgomery's work. See, in particular, Chris Worsnop and Roberta

Bartlett, '*Anne of Green Gables*: Educators' Guide,'

http://annetoon.com/EducatorsGuides/LiveActionEducatorsGuide.pdf.

[40] 'Anne of Green Gables Message Boards,' http://www.anneofgreengables.com/board/.

[41] Haste and Abrams, 'Morality, Culture and the Dialogic Self,' 381.

[42] Blackford, Out of This World, 2, 6.

Children are already learning at birth, and they develop and learn at a rapid pace in their early years. This provides a critical foundation for lifelong progress, and the adults who provide for the care and education of children from birth through age 8 bear a great responsibility for their health, development, and learning. Studies have shown that early childhood is a time when developmental changes are happening that can have profound and lasting consequences for a child's future. While people have long debated whether "nature" or "nurture" plays the stronger role in child development, recent studies reveal the importance of how the two influence each other as a child develops: what a child experiences and is exposed to interacts with his or her underlying biological makeup.