



Symposium for festival programmers

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 **ITALY**
Bologna Children's Book Fair



3 talks about digital stories for childrens

In March, at the 33rd International Bologna Children's Book Fair, Transbook hosted its fourth programmer symposium. Nadia Budde, the German illustrator of "One, two, three, me", attended the event, as did Frédéric Gauthier, one of the founders of the Quebecois publishing company "La Pastèque", and Ben Newman, the illustrator of the successful "Professor Astrocat" series. Their contributions to the symposium helped explore what makes a digital literature project a good one.

Nadia Budde, illustrator, **GERMANY**

Frédéric Gauthier, editor, **QUEBECOIS**

Ben Newman, illustrator, **UNITED-KINGDOM**

A BETTER USE OF DIGITAL APPS

Ben Newman's colourful and inventive illustrations create a world of fun and quirky characters. After working with cultural institutions and prestigious brands, including the Tate Modern, Google and the BBC, he now focuses almost exclusively on the famous "Professor Astrocat" series he developed with his childhood friend Dominic Walliman. Released in 2013, the first volume of the series explores a wide variety of topics, from the birth of the universe to the existence of life beyond Earth, through the adventures of a savvy cat.

At the Transbook symposium, Ben discussed the digital adaptation of books starring the UK's most famous cat in space. Driving the authors' decision was the specific potential offered by the digital format as a way to stretch the narrative and educational limits sometimes imposed by printed books. Books remain a difficult hurdle for some children, and an app, because it is interactive, is an excellent way to spark an interest in science, technology and mathematics.

One of the biggest concerns of parents today is how their children use devices such as tablets, smartphones and computers. The issue of control has evolved, and most kids now have access to at least one of these tools. Whether we like it or not, children are attracted to screens. It is essential that time with screens be spent wisely. With this in mind, Ben Newman and Dominic Walliman created Professor Astrocat as a mix of games and high-quality educational content.

USING DIGITAL FORMATS TO LEARN

Berlin-born illustrator Nadia Budde expressed similar views. Her book "One, Two, Three, Me" looks at series of things, animals, and how they can be grouped together! Each page shows three characters from the same family, and one that doesn't belong. Nadia intentionally makes things a bit confusing for her readers by having animals with phonetically similar names appear together.

The animation in the app is another example of the educational nature of the project. Young readers are invited to join in and play with Nadia Budde's zany creatures to learn what they are called and develop their vocabulary. The concept is simple: learning by doing, not repetition.

INTERACTIVITY, ORIGINALITY AND DIVERSITY

Editions La Pastèque developed a rather special project to celebrate their 20th anniversary. They asked André Marois to create a script for an interactive, 12-episode series about the life of Arthur the pizza delivery man. Each episode is entrusted to an author/illustrator, who is free to choose the format and how they bring the story to life. The result is a surprising adventure composed of mini-games, comic strips, horizontal scrolling, as well as social media and virtual reality compo-

nents.

What do the episodes have in common? They are a multi-sensory adventure that really involves the reader in the story's narrative arc. Linear structure is turned upside down: how will readers interact with the characters created by the authors? What will their role be? To what extent will they write history?

In children's literature especially, books have always offered readers original, interactive possibilities. Authors can now use apps and technology such as virtual and augmented reality to take this interactivity to new levels. Digital projects are not designed just as copies of the books they are based on. By fully exploring the features of the format they use, authors are re-inventing storylines to give an active role to readers.



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