Dear Colleagues:

The East Coast may have been buried under record amounts of snowfall last month, but that hasn’t slowed the Cooney Center team down. We’ve been busy polishing up some new publications, preparing for events, and planning another productive year ahead. Be sure to check out our blog and follow us on Facebook and Twitter for more updates about forthcoming reports scanning the market for literacy apps and digital equity in America.

Digital Equity: Technology and Learning in the Lives of Lower-Income Families

The Joan Ganz Cooney Center, Rutgers University, and New America are pleased to present Digital Equity: Technology & Learning in the Lives of Lower Income Families. FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler will deliver opening remarks at the event, hosted by New America at their new headquarters. Vicky Rideout and Vikki Katz will present key findings from the results of a nationally representative survey of lower-income families, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The event will be livestreamed: https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/digital-equity/

Follow the discussion online by using #DigitalEquity and following @NewAmericaEd and @CooneyCenter

Diverse Families and Media: Using Research to Inspire Design

For the past two years, Families and Media project researchers have been studying low-income and language-minority communities in California, New York, Arizona, Colorado, and Illinois. This research-based guide is created for educators and media designers who create programs for children and families. Diverse Families and Media offers stories of family media use that were documented in our studies, and raise design-relevant questions as well as suggest design principles that can be applied more broadly. The goal of the guide is to help producers and designers gain insight from our research with families, particularly those from underserved groups, and help refine existing programs or give rise to new concepts.

Check out the report. »

Getting a Read on the App Stores

The Joan Ganz Cooney Center and New America recently conducted a scan of the market for language and literacy apps targeted for young children in the Apple, Google Play, and Amazon app stores. Getting a Read on the App Stores analyzes the descriptions of the apps as well as their content to learn more about what parents are likely to encounter as they search for educational apps for their young children. The report covers recent trends and surfaces some recommendations for developers who are creating apps for children, as well as for parents and teachers looking for quality apps to teach foundational language and literacy skills to young children.

Check out the report. »

Digital Games and Family Life: Quick Survey!

Are you the parent or guardian of a child between 4 and 13 years of age? Do your children play video games? If so, you are eligible to take a survey about...
digital games and family life.

In 2014, the Cooney Center launched a study to learn about digital game play in families. We are expanding our study to gather current information about how families are playing digital games in 2016. If you are the parent of a child between ages 4 and 13 and your child plays digital games, please consider taking our survey! It will only take five minutes, and if you complete the survey, you may enter a drawing for one of two $25 Amazon gift certificates.

Take the survey »

Also on the blog

D is for Developer

We are thrilled to share this commentary from former Cooney Center fellow Carly Shuler, who is the co-founder and CEO of Kindoma, whose apps connect families through video and storytelling. A seasoned media researcher and parent of young children, Carly took a close look at Getting a Read on the App Stores through the lens of a developer as well. Check out the post for the messages that resonated most with her. Read the post »

Issues to Look for in Early Literacy Apps

What are some of the key issues that parents, educators, and developers should keep in mind when selecting or even producing literacy apps for young children? Researchers Barbara Culatta, Kendra Hall-Kenyon, and Gary Bingham shared an informative and provocative post that offers tips for ensuring that children get the best experience from the apps they have access to. Learn more »

Where’s the Evidence on Evidence? My Beef with the Lack of Efficacy Data on Apps

Sesame Workshop’s Vice President of Research & Evaluation Jennifer Kotler Clarke asks “Where’s the evidence?” If an educational app claims to be “educational,” shouldn’t parents and teachers be able to find data that backs those claims? Now that the educational apps industry is becoming more firmly established, where are the standards and guidelines that establish some sort of quality control on what allows an app to be called “educational?” Read the full post »

Launching Soon: The 5th National STEM Video Game Challenge

The fifth cycle of the National STEM Video Game Challenge will launch in 2016. Registration opens on March 15th, and all submissions are due by August 15th. This extended submission period allows individuals and teams to enter and design their video games not only during the school year, but also — for the first time ever — during the summer months! (Note that eligibility will be linked to grade enrollment during the 2015–16 school year.) Winners will be announced in Fall 2016. Please visit this web page and related social media for more details in the months ahead.

Read more about the National STEM Video Game Challenge. And we’ll be sharing profiles of each of our winners in the coming weeks. Follow the STEM Challenge on Facebook and Twitter for more updates!

Team News

We’re thrilled to welcome Jordan Shapiro, Ph.D., as a Senior Fellow for Playful Learning. He is already familiar to Cooney Center readers as the author of the MindShift Guide to Games and Learning, and a frequent columnist for Forbes.com.

We are also pleased to announce that Vikki Katz has been named Senior Research Scientist at the Cooney Center.

We hope that you will join us in congratulating Briana Pressey, our research manager, on her acceptance at USC Annenberg’s School of Communication’s PhD program!

And our longtime Senior Director and Research Scientist Lori Takeuchi, has taken a new position with an exciting new startup. We are happy that she will remain with us as a Senior Fellow, and wish her the best of luck!

We hope that you will join us as an active contributor and a member of our growing community on the web and on Facebook and Twitter as we partner with foundations, policy, industry and academic leaders to advance learning in our digital age!