



Our amazing
LittleClickers
topic this
month...



June 2018

Alexa, read me a bedtime story

Amazon has a new
pipeline for children's
content.

We explore the issues
surrounding smart
speakers and children,
as well collecting
children's information.



On the cover: Amazon's

Children's Technology Review
June 2018

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Axel Scheffler's Flip Flap
Dinosaurs*
Echo Dot Kids Edition
Feed Me Cookie Monster
Fingerlings Untamed
Raptors

KUBO
My Perfect Puppy
My Town: ICEE
Amusement Park
Puzzle World
Sketch Kit by Wonder
Workshop
Toca Mystery House
TutorIQ



* Denotes "Editor's Choice."

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- There is no sponsored or advertising content of any variety.
- Complete transparency. We make every effort to disclose review criteria and sources of potential bias.
- We don't skim from other reviewers.

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"Animals had legal rights before children." Learn more about the history of children's rights, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/15/health/15abus.html>

EDITORIAL -- WE ADULTS SHOULD STAND UP FOR A CHILD'S LEGAL RIGHTS
As a reviewer of children's interactive media with a background in child development, I frequently stumble upon bad behavior in some of the products I review. It's easy to find examples. Some are promoted heavily to children in the largest app stores. My Tamagotchi Forever is one of many examples <http://reviews.childrenstech.com/ctr/fullreview.php?id=19837>

Why are these experiences harmful? They are specifically designed to trick a child for financial gain. They mix cute animals with BF Skinner's operating conditioning, Natasha Dow Schüll's ludic loop and Mihály Csíkszentmihályi's flow state. They call these techniques "onboarding" and "leveling" to create just enough "friction" to get children to buy something.

But they're free. Why is this bad? Like weeds, these types of experiences choke out the ethical publishers like Toca Boca, Tinybop and Nosy Crow by using a child's device storage, battery power and bandwidth. They also waste something more valuable -- play time. In the USA, these experiences are largely unregulated and undocumented, and they fly beneath COPPA requirements.

What should be done? App stores who sell products for children should do a better job disclosing the actual costs of all experiences, as defined as the total possible amount of money an app might be able to collect. In My Tamagotchi Forever, it is possible to spend \$99 in real dollars in a single transaction, in order to unlock the full app. These costs are fuzzy and hard to define. Secondly, app stores should make it easier for teachers, librarians and parents to find "ethical" apps. These are experiences that are free of commercial motives, and that are transparent about all costs and commercial content, before the purchase point. In the meantime, we'll do our part by flagging this behavior as frequently as possible.

LEADERSHIP FROM THE UK: THE GDPR

We were happy to leadership in the area of children's data collection from the ICO (Information Commissioners Office) from England. The GDPR, or General Data Protection Regulation) is from an independent government group designed to set up to and uphold information rights. The USA (and USA app sellers) would do well to study this concept. Read more at <http://bitly.com/2xDxhuU>

At a glance:

- Children need particular protection when you are collecting and processing their personal data because they may be less aware of the risks involved.
- If you process children's personal data then you should think about the need to protect them from the outset, and design your systems and processes with this in

Dust or Magic

Save the date!
www.dustormagic.com

Nov 4-6, 2018 • Institute The 18th Annual fall institute will once again take place at the Inn at Lambertville Station. \$1480/seat.

Your Subscription is Your Key to 12,764 Archived Reviews

Your paid \$20 or \$60 subscription to *CTR* includes exclusive password access to the *CTREX* database — a collection of reviews going back to 1985. If you've lost or forgotten your password, please call 908-284-0404 between 9-3 PM EST.

Exploring Scratch

5 (or so) sites & 10 videos

Read this column online, with links, at www.littleclickers.com/drones

LittleClickers
Safe, fun Internet
explorations
for children

Computer
Explorers

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Visit www.computerexplorers.com to learn more. The web-based (html) version of this page is at

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Scratch is a free, easy to learn computer language that is growing in popularity. Did you know there are six types of projects you can make? Can you name them? Let's take a closer look, at <https://scratch.mit.edu/explore/projects/all>

1. Animations. Use the camera and timing features to make things move on the screen. <https://scratch.mit.edu/explore/projects/animations/>

2. Art. Scratch has built in drawing tools that make it possible draw in freestyle. You can also create interesting geometric patterns, like this one. <https://scratch.mit.edu/explore/projects/art/>

3. Games. From Pong to Pokémon, you can find all sorts of games in Scratch. Maze games are good to start with, because they introduce you to motion and collisions. <https://scratch.mit.edu/explore/projects/games/>

4. Music. Scratch gives you a library of sounds, or you can record your own. <https://scratch.mit.edu/explore/projects/music/>

5. Stories. You can mix your writing with pictures, videos or recordings. In fact, Scratch makes it easy to narrate your story. <https://scratch.mit.edu/explore/projects/stories/>

6. Tutorials. What to learn how to stain pencils, or make a good thumbnail? Here are some tutorials, where kids teach kids things. <https://scratch.mit.edu/explore/projects/tutorials/>

APPLICATION How do I Start Scratching? Using a laptop (Mac, Windows or Chrome) go to www.mit.scratch.edu make an account. A laptop with a camera and microphone is recommended. Get started with Scratch in 3 steps

Step 1: Find Scratch. On your computer, type the word "Scratch" into any search engine, or go to <http://mit.scratch.edu>

Step 2: Register. Think up a screen name and password. You'll also need an email address in order to confirm the account. Login, and choose "Create."

Step 3: Take the tutorials. We've linked to some tutorials in this month's YouTube playlist. It's also smart to preview samples. https://scratch.mit.edu/starter_projects/



Scratch on YouTube

Want more? Here's a video playlist that go along with this column <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjcOmKeifVUUH5s4E4OrMhg>



mind.

- Compliance with the data protection principles and in particular fairness should be central to all your processing of children's personal data.
- You need to have a lawful basis for processing a child's personal data. Consent is one possible lawful basis for processing, but it is not the only option. Sometimes using an alternative basis is more appropriate and provides better protection for the child.
- If you are relying on consent as your lawful basis for processing, when offering an online service directly to a child, in the UK only children aged 13 or over are able provide their own consent.
- For children under this age you need to get consent from whoever holds parental responsibility for the child - unless the online service you offer is a preventive or counselling service.
- Children merit specific protection when you use their personal data for marketing purposes or creating personality or user profiles.
- You should not usually make decisions based solely on automated processing about children if this will have a legal or similarly significant effect on them.
- You should write clear privacy notices for children so that they are able to understand what will happen to their personal data, and what rights they have.
- Children have the same rights as adults over their personal data. These include the rights to access their personal data; request rectification; object to processing and have their personal data erased.
- An individual's right to erasure is particularly relevant if they gave their consent to processing when they were a child.

COMMON SENSE MEDIA RELEASE REPORT ON DATA COLLECTION IN EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY

"Almost all the ed-tech applications do not clearly define safeguards taken to protect child/student information, and do not support encryption, or lack a detailed privacy policy."

The May 24, 2018 called 2018 State of EdTech Privacy Report (by Girard Kelly and Jeff Graham) at <http://bitly.com/2xzUaj0> found things like advertising within the context of displaying content and behavioral ads based on the child's usage of the service.

"Among web-based services, 37 percent indicate that collected information can be used by tracking technologies and third-party advertisers, 21 percent indicate the collected data may be used to track visitors after they leave the site, and 30 percent ignore "do not track" requests or other mechanisms to opt out."

What happens to a child's personal information? "Nearly three-fourths (74 percent) indicate they maintain the right to transfer any personal information they collect if the company is acquired, merged, or files for bankruptcy." Read the Edweek summary, at <http://bitly.com/2xATcTp>

LITTLECLICKERS: SCRATCH TUNE UP

What's new is Scratch? We go straight to the source to make sure we're See page three.

SMART SPEAKERS -- FOR CHILDREN

Here's an undisputed fact. The next generation will grow up in a world with smart speakers. Amazon's new Echo Kids (on this month's cover) is one of the first mainstream speakers to target children specifically. What do you need to know? These devices represent a convergence of three software technologies:



amazon.com

ECHO DOT KIDS EDITION, A SMART SPEAKER WITH ...

\$79.99 prime

ASR = Automatic Speech Recognition
NLP = Natural Language Processing
AI = Artificial Intelligence
ML = Machine Learning.

Why the difference in the cost between the regular Dot and the Kids Edition? It's the one year of access to the audio content that is part of Amazon's "FreeTime Unlimited." This includes 300 Audible books for kids, like Beauty & the Beast and Peter Pan, thousands of songs, and kid-favorite games and COPPA compliant kid skills from Disney, National Geographic and Nickelodeon. "Kid skills" are skills that have been identified by the developer as directed to children under age 13.

Kids love the voice interface, and use it for all kinds of things -- especially playing music, asking questions, and setting timers. If you have several Echos on the same Wi-Fi network, you can set them up as an in-house intercom.

Parents can review activity, set limits at bedtime, filter explicit songs from Amazon Music and toggle off voice shopping. The kids version comes with more positive interaction style that includes "please" and "thank you."

The bundle comes with 1 year of Amazon FreeTime Unlimited. After one year, your subscription will automatically renew every month, with prices that start at \$2.99/month plus tax. So if you use your Amazon Echo Kids for 10 years, you will have invested about \$530.

Learn more by listening to a talk given by Martin Farrows, COO Soapbox Labs, a Dublin publisher that specializes in voice driven products for children, at <https://youtu.be/IH2St9c5EmY>



Feature Reviews and New Releases

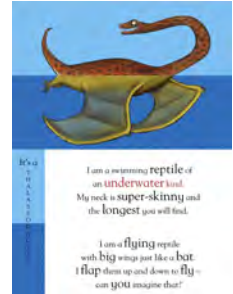
JUNE 2018

Here's an alphabetical listing of both the feature reviews (with ratings) and the new and future releases. "Entry Date" refers to the date we first learned of the product.

Axel Scheffler's Flip Flap Dinosaurs

This is the seventh (and sadly, the last) in the Flip Flap series from Nosy Crow. Each comes with an associated printed book (with the physical pages sliced horizontally). This app follows the same format as the previous editions, featuring 11 well-illustrated (by artist Axel Scheffler) dinosaurs. Cross the Tyrannosaurus rex top with a Triceratops bottom and you get a Tyranno-tops. The real dinosaur names are fun to try to read. There are 11 complete animals, giving you the possibility to make 121 total combinations, each with a well written narrated rhyme, with the option to turn on/off word highlighting. The art is by Axel Scheffler, illustrator of The Gruffalo. There are two modes: Read by Myself or Read and Play. The fonts, narration and text highlighting also make it a noteworthy language experience.

Details: Nosy Crow, www.nosycrow.com. Price: \$.99. Ages: 4-7. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: reading, language, dinosaurs. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.8 stars. Entry date: 5/15/2018. []



Ease of Use	10	} 96 %
Educational	10	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	10	



Echo Dot Kids Edition

We have not yet tested the Kids edition of the Echo Dot, but we have a lot of experience with the Echo platform, and have studied the press materials. Here's what you need to know. From a hardware point of view, this is a regular \$50 black Echo dot, only in a colorful bounce proof silicon wrapper. Question 1: Why does a device you rarely touch needs a protective case? Question 2: Why the difference in the cost between the regular Dot and the Kids Edition? It's the one year of access to the audio content that is part of Amazon's "FreeTime Unlimited." This includes 300 Audible books for kids, like *Beauty & the Beast* and *Peter Pan*, thousands of songs, and kid-favorite games and COPPA compliant kid skills from Disney, National Geographic and Nickelodeon. Kid skills are skills that have been identified by the developer as directed to children under age 13. Amazon requires permission from a parent before kid skills can be used. After you've given permission, you will receive a confirmation e-mail.

The key feature is the cloud based Parent Dashboard (managed through your laptop or Amazon Echo App running on your phone or tablet) that lets you customize your Echo for your child. What can a child do with a smart speaker like an Echo Dot? A lot. Kids of all ages love the voice interface, and use it for all kinds of things -- especially playing music, asking questions, and setting timers. The Parent Dashboard lets you manage the FreeTime Unlimited "skills" from publishers like Disney, National Geographic and Nickelodeon. If you have several Echos on the same Wi-Fi network, you can set them up as an in-house intercom.

Parents review activity, set limits at bedtime, filter explicit songs from Amazon Music and toggle off voice shopping. The kids version comes with more positive interaction style that includes "please" and "thank you."

The bundle comes with 1 year of Amazon FreeTime Unlimited, and a kid-friendly case and a two year guarantee. The included 1 year of FreeTime Unlimited includes access to ad-free radio stations and playlists, Audible books, and a growing list of premium kids skills. After one year, your subscription will automatically renew every month, with prices that start at \$2.99/month plus tax.

Potential concerns: Amazon's content follows the main cultural rivers, serving as pipeline to mainstream forms of media. The initial cost involves hidden purchases. If you use your Amazon Echo Kids for 10 years, you'll have invested a minimum of \$530, providing you don't terminate your FreeTime subscription.

Details: Amazon.com, www.amazon.com. Price: \$80 plus \$60/year per device after 12 months. Ages: 3-up. Platform: . Teaches/Purpose: A smart speaker for children. Language: . Entry date: 5/12/2018.

Feed Me Cookie Monster

This singing, vibrating plush toy is just like Tickle Me Elmo, only it's Cookie Monster. If you squeeze his belly he rumbles, and when you put the cookie in his mouth, he responds with the Cookie Monster song. Powered by AA batteries. Release date "Fall 2018."

Details: Hasbro, Inc., www.hasbro.com. Price: \$30. Ages: 3-6. Platform: . Teaches/Purpose: a musical plush toy. Entry date: 4/14/2018.

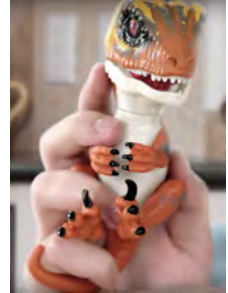




Fingerlings Untamed Raptors

This hand-sized plastic robots have a curved tail so they can hang upside down, opossum style. Sound, touch and motion can result in subtle head and eye motions and jaws that open and close; along with 40 different sounds. Powered by 4 button cell batteries. There are four versions, each with different personalities (Stealth, Blaze, Fury and Razor). Learn more at <https://www.fingerlings.com/>

Details: WowWee USA, Inc., www.wowwee.com. Price: \$15. Ages: 5-up. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: a collectible toy. Entry date: 5/22/2018.



KUBO

This self contained slow rolling robot was invented in Denmark (released last year) and is being sold in the USA by Pitsco. No screens or external devices are required. The system uses interlocking jigsaw puzzle pieces (called "TagTile") to make a track -- each part represents a command. So you can make simple programs by laying out the commands in sequence. The robot reads the tiles by using RFID technology. The set includes a KUBO robot, one printed activity map, one blank map, and a charger.

Also available to teachers is KUBO Education (KEDU), an online delivery portal with teaching materials and "12 hours of content in which students earn their license to code."

Link: <https://www.pitsco.com/Shop/KUBO>

Details: Pitsco Education, www.pitsco.com. Price: \$279. Ages: 5-7. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: coding, programming, robots. Entry date: 5/22/2018.



My Perfect Puppy

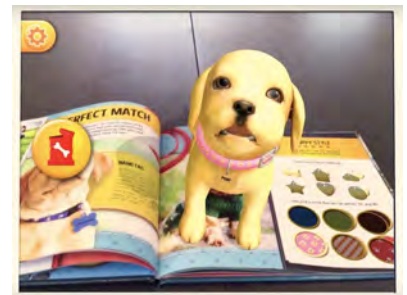
A good book meets clunky (but innovative) AR, with the "My Perfect Puppy" book/app combination. After you purchase the large, 32 page hardcover book (Carlton Books) for about \$10 -- and you have a high quality, durable, illustrated non-fiction book by Kay Woodward with clear photos and real puppy facts. We're not book reviewers however. The associated AR experience will only work if you own the book. After you search iTunes or Google Play to find the app, you open the book to trigger the AR effects on your phone or tablet. Depending on the page, a puppy jumps off the page of your book.

You can name up to four puppies, give him/her a color and/or tag, swipe to teach them tricks, "pet" them, give them treats or play a game of fetch.

There are six puppies with there is a new AR experience on every spread of the book.

If you buy the book, all the triggers all the content in the app for free. If you don't have the book, you can download the free app and unlock the AR triggers as an in-app purchase for \$2.99. (Apple required all AR content to be accessible, even if you did not have the book, which is why there is a \$2.99 in app purchase option for the AR Triggers). See iBugs by Carlton for a better AR experience.

Details: Carlton Books Limited, www.carltonbooks.co.uk. Price: \$free (book costs \$10). Ages: 4-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: language, animals, dogs. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4 stars. Entry date: 2/13/2018. []



Ease of Use	6	80 %
Educational	8	
Entertaining	8	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	9	



My Town: ICEE Amusement Park

Here's one way to support the cost of making apps -- find a sponsor (and charge for the app). My Town: ICEE Amusement Park follows the typical dollhouse style format use by previous "My Town" apps; and also the popular Toca Life apps. The result is a solid open-ended play experience that is generally high in child control, with embedded commercial content. Testers struggled when trying to move characters through doors.

You can move from screen to screen, exploring items typically found in a theme park. There's also a "find the needle in the haystack" pattern, that rewards you for spending time in the app.

The characters display emotions, so you might see scared looks during some of the amusement park rides. When you need to take a break, you can visit the ICEE store to pick up branded swag, or drink your favorite flavor Icee in a special cup. The Icee mascot appears on nearly every screen. Icee makes a frozen carbonated beverage available in fruit and soda flavors. If you have more than one My Town game, you can bring characters from those apps into this game. The My Town apps are pay once & play forever, with free updates.

Details: My Town Games, <http://www.my-town.com>. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 4-8. Platform: . Teaches/Purpose: creativity, logic. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.1 stars. Entry date: 5/8/2018. []



Ease of Use	8	82 %
Educational	8	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	8	

Puzzle World

A set of simple geography-themed outline puzzles. If you successfully complete nine or so puzzles, you hear the national anthem. Each puzzle shows you a short animation that can vary in quality. Designed to informally introduce country flags, anthems and some basics of geography. Content is limited, as is the design. We noticed some stereotypical characters (e.g., the Asian has slanted eyes).

Details: Mobokids, www.mobokids.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 2-6. Platform: iPad, Android. Teaches/Purpose: Geography. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.7 stars. Entry date: 4/24/2018. []



Ease of Use	9	74 %
Educational	8	
Entertaining	7	
Design Features	6	
Good Value	7	



Sketch Kit by Wonder Workshop

Remember Seymour Papert's physical rolling turtle? Some renditions could drag a pen, resulting in a direct link between code and geometric patterns. It also resulted in famous "pen up" and "pen down" commands. That basic idea is back with this specialized snap on accessory for Dash and Cue robots. Sketch Kit attaches underneath either the Cue or the older Dash robots, letting them drag a single white board marker. The holder can only hold one color at a time, although it is easy to snap a new marker into place. The objective is to allow a child to visualize the results from their code. So far, so good, right?

There are some things to note. The components are not cheap, and they can only be used for one thing. Besides the Cue (\$200) or Dash (\$150) robot, you'll need your phone or tablet, plus the \$40 Sketch Kit that contains the eraser, several pens and the special snap-on accessory. You'll also need a horizontal white board surface or very smooth tabletop. Wonder Workshop sells a large white board grid sheet that is perfect for the job -- but it costs \$100. It's too bad the kit can't accomodate standard markers or work on sheets of paper.

TESTING RESULTS. We tried the kit in Mediatech. Strengths include the well engineered pen holder, that makes a nice, clear line on a slippery white board surface. But we were disappointed by all of the steps involved in using the Cue system, especially when using the Cue app. There are too many delays. You can't start the app without an account, and our kids had to wait 15 minutes while our robot installed an update. Once in, testers were frustrated by the clunky tutorials with steps that can't be skipped. In addition, the three Cue "personalities" remove the opportunity to simply drive around or make a pattern. Note that we only tested the iOS version. We're hopeful that the Chrome edition might work better.

Details: Wonder Workshop, www.makewonder.com. Price: \$40. Ages: 6-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, Android, Chrome. Teaches/Purpose: programming, logic, creativity. Entry date: 5/8/2018.

Toca Mystery House

Coming June 14, a "mysterious house full of weird music, strange creatures and a kitchen covered in slime." Stay tuned for a full review.

Details: Toca Boca, <http://tocaboca.com/>. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 4-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: logic. Entry date: 6/1/2018.





TutorIQ

This is a human-to-human tutoring system. After you download the app and register, your child is connected with a "professional educator" for a live tutoring session, using curriculum drawn from ABCmouse. The cross-platform, web-based design lets you connect with your tutors anytime through your computer, tablet, or phone. According to the press materials the learning is customized for each child. Learn more at <http://www.tutoriQ.com/>

Note that costs are not fully disclosed up front, and the qualifications of the "expert" tutors are not easily disclosed prior to the purchase point. This service uses extensive data collection and an automatic billing system.

Details: Age of Learning, Inc., www.ABCmouse.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 4-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, Android. Teaches/Purpose: math, reading. Entry date: 5/28/2018.

