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# “Cause I know how to get friends- plus they like my dancing”: (L)earning the nexus of practice in Club Penguin

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**URI:** <http://hdl.handle.net/2022/22846>

**Date:** 2013

**Publisher:** Peter Lang

**Citation:** Wohlwend, K. E., & Kargin, T. (2013). “Cause I know how to get friends- plus they like my dancing”: (L)earning the nexus of practice in Club Penguin. In A. Burke & J. Marsh (Eds.), *Children's virtual play worlds: Culture, learning and participation* (pp. 79-98). Oxford: Peter Lang.

**Other version:** <https://www.peterlang.com/view/title/22070>

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**DOI:** 10.3726/978-1-4539-1069-6

**ISBN:** 978-1-4331-4180-5

**Type:** Book chapter

### Abstract:

What happens when young children sit side by side while their avatars play together on global playgrounds in virtual worlds? In this chapter, we examine activity in an afterschool computer club in which children play in Club Penguin (Disney), a social networking and gaming virtual world website where players are represented online as penguin avatars. Here, we focus on the ways children teach each other a range of digital literacy practices in order to read screens, gather social goods, and send messages to other avatars as they help each other understand how to participate in an online peer culture. We suggest this mediating and mediated activity in a virtual world depends upon their face-to-face cooperation, situated in peer-teaching practices that were common in computer affinity groups in the peer culture in one afterschool program. The interrelationships among peer cultures, popular media, and digital literacy practices of adolescents and young adults have been heavily researched (Black & Steinkuehler, 2009). Many pre-teens and adolescents access and wield spatialized literacies (Leander & Sheehy, 2004) that blur boundaries across time and space as they participate in social media or online games in complex digital networks (Leander & McKim, 2003). Far less attention has focused on how young children who are emergent readers and writers interact in online social networks, particularly in new media spheres that host children's digital cultures such as Club Penguin.

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The following is a transcript from "Club Penguin: Monster Beach Party". Garugg the Ugg Ugg: (runs across ice) Ah ah! Oooh! Woaaaaa! (panting). (frigid winds blow across screen, freezing everything). Garugg the Ugg Ugg: (breaks out of ice and shivers) Ice Age sureee come fast! Ooga ooga. (a chunk of the ice breaks open, with a dramatic close-up). (alarm goes off) Jangrah: (wakes up) Ah! Another perfect morning. (presses button, revealing wall of checklists) Wake up, check. Grab clipboard, check. Check "Cause I know how to get friends--plus they like my dancing": (L)earning the nexus of practice in Club Penguin. In A. Burke & J. Marsh (Eds.), *Children's virtual play worlds: Culture, learning and participation* (pp. 79-98). Oxford: Peter Lang. Publication Date: Jan 1, 2013. Publication Name: *Children's Virtual Play Worlds: Culture, Learning and Participation*. Research Interests: Play, Digital Media, Video Games and Learning, Mediated Discourse Analysis, Early Childhood Literacy, and 5 moreCritical Discourse Analysis, Digital Media And New Literacies, Virtual Worlds, Digital Liter