

ELINET SYMPOSIUM · LJUBLJANA 2026

Digitally Shaped Stories

How digital narratives transform children's meaning-making and reader participation.

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DIGITAL NARRATIVES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Digital Narratives Observatory
Report 2026

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Digital Narratives Observatory

M A P

Emerging digital narrative forms

F O S T E R D I A L O G U E

Research, publishing, and educational practice

O R I E N T

Create, publish, and teach with stories

How are digital technologies transforming narratives for children — and what does this mean for the child as reader?



From publishers

who produce children's narratives

...

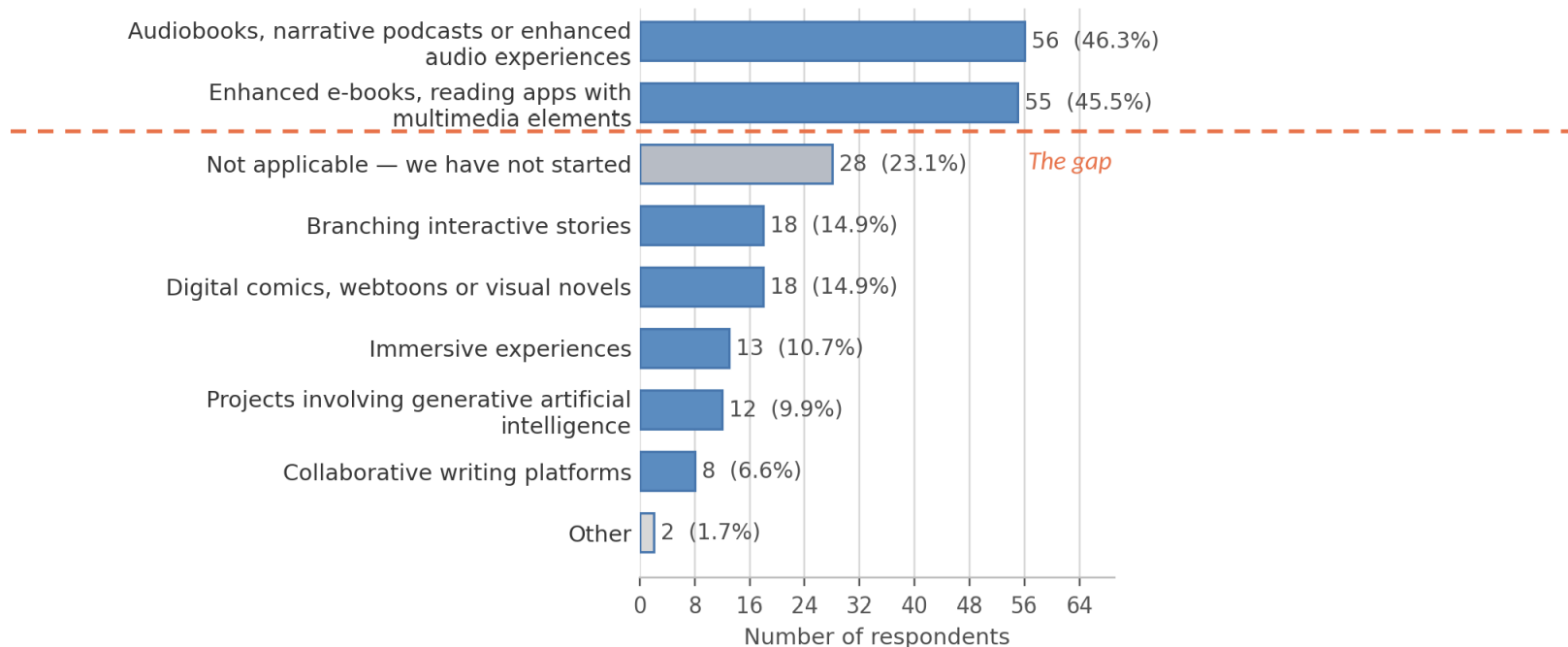


From research

on how children experience and read them

Activity is concentrated in familiar formats

Areas in which publishers are active or considering activity



The barriers are economic, organisational and cultural

Main challenges associated with digital narratives

Economic

47.1% uncertainty about demand

43.8% production costs

Cultural and identity-related

33.9% AI ethics and children's data

~30% fear of devaluing the book

24.8% literary quality concerns

"What happens to the story, to the reader, and to the identity of children's publishing if we do?"

FROM RESEARCH

Four modes of digital narrative

Defined by the relationship between story and reader — not by the technology used.

1 Media-Enhanced Reading

Medium changes, story does not. Narrative still linear.

Audiobook · enhanced e-book · webtoon

2 Traversing

The author offers different paths. The reader picks the route.

Choose-your-own-adventure · Inanimate Alice

3 Inhabiting

The reader enters the story world. No fixed sequence.

Breathe by Kate Pullinger

4 Co-Creating

The reader becomes co-author. Where AI has entered most powerfully.

Colin (Ye et al., 2025) — child speaks & draws · AI writes

CrossMedia Award matrix

79%

Media-Enhanced
Reading
as primary mode

24 awarded titles • BolognaRagazzi CrossMedia Awards 2021–2025

Title / Year	Media-Enhanced Reading	Traversing	Inhabiting	Co-Creating
<i>The Snail and the Whale</i> (UK, 2021)	•			
<i>Hilda and the Troll</i> (UK, 2021)	•			
<i>Tutto il Contrario</i> (Italy, 2021)	○	•		
<i>Les quatre nouvelles saisons d'en sortant de l'école</i> (France, 2022)	•			
<i>The Tiger Who Came to Tea</i> (UK, 2022)	•			
<i>Sulla sfortunata vita dei vermi</i> (Italy, 2022)	•			
<i>Un point c'est tout</i> (France, 2022)	○	•		
<i>Intraducibles</i> (Mexico, 2022)	•		○	○

The empty cells are not a limitation of the framework.
They are the finding.

Can AI develop real agency?

The question is not whether AI enables co-creation, but what kind of co-creation it enables.

QUESTION 1

Whose choices structure the story — the child's, or the model's?

QUESTION 2

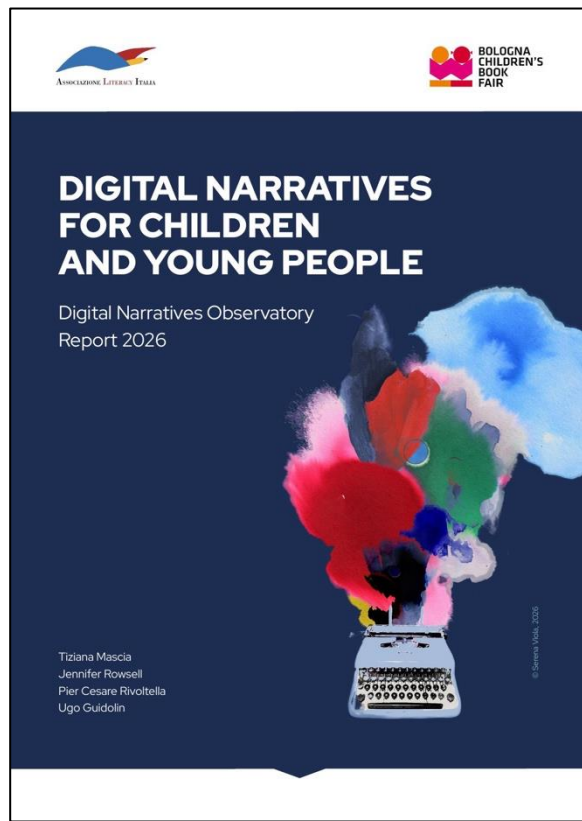
Whose authorship are we recognising — and whose are we losing?

A case study: No Imagination Allowed

CrossMedia Awards 2026 · Special Mention



Authentic co-creation, but asymmetric



Thank you

FULL REPORT

Available at:

<https://www.bolognachildrensbookfair.com/eventi/digital-narratives-observatory/16434.html>

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