Kids Publish On Line at KidPub: www.kidpub.org/kidpub/

by Peggy Loofbourrow

When I taught junior high in the early eighties, publishing my students’ writing meant they would neatly recopy it, staple on construction-paper covers, and bring it home for mom and dad to read. This process was thrilling for the student, for mom and dad, for me.

Then came the days of word-processed pages, spiral bindings and laminated covers. Really cool. I learned that I needed to find other audiences for my 150 student writers, so I began looking for alternatives to mom and dad. We donated a batch of spiral-bound books to a local pediatrician for use in her waiting room. We sent letters of complaint, letters of compliment, letters for Amnesty International. We partnered with local elementary school classes and wrote stories for the children. My students became energized and motivated with the knowledge that their writing would be read by at least one person other than me.

But then, those were the prehistoric days of Pac Man and Pong.

These are the days of Myst and Nintendo 64, and now I have children of my own in school. And while spiral bindings and local audiences still make up the bulk of my second-grade son’s classroom publishing opportunities, nothing has generated as much enthusiasm with Ryan and his classmates as my query, “Would you like to publish a story on the Internet, so that anyone in the world with a computer and a modem can read it?”

With these words I introduced Ryan’s class to KidPub, a World Wide Web site devoted to publishing student writing. On KidPub kids can publish a story, find a pen pal, add a paragraph to a never-ending story, play a game, and more. And writing teachers can publish their children’s stories—classes full of them!

To introduce KidPub to Ryan’s class, I logged on to the site and read aloud the stories, countries and continents from which classes had published stories: California, Florida, Illinois, Canada, England, Italy, Australia. The children selected a variety of schools and we looked at each school’s site. Each class had provided descriptions of its school and community, and some even included pictures. I read aloud a variety of titles from stories and the students selected the first one to read: “The Candy War” by a second grader from New York (titles are pretty important when choosing from thousands of children’s stories). After reading a number of stories written by children from all over the world, Ryan and his classmates were eager to produce their best work so that kids from all over the world could read their stories, too.

Putting stories on the Internet via KidPub is very simple; directions are provided right on the site. In fact, before I could get the class up and running, one of Ryan’s classmates took the KidPub web address home and, with her dad’s help, posted a story herself! (You can read it on KidPub—it’s by Heather Dawn, age 7 1/2, of San Ramon, CA. You can also send her e-mail if you like her story—that info. is on the site too.) One week after introducing KidPub to Ryan, Heather, and their class, I found Heather’s story on KidPub and read it to the children. At the bottom of the story, KidPub had recorded how many people had accessed it—more than thirty in one week. Now that’s publishing!