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designing

typozilla

<http://www.typozilla.co.nz>

An online application that appeals to gifted children.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Design at Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis responds to the specific educational and social needs of gifted children within the context of online applications. Online enrichment activities and social opportunities are only successful if they are able to attract and sustain attention of the advanced interests of gifted children.

The aim of the research is to design an online application that appeals to gifted children and recognises the identified intellectual and social needs within the New Zealand context. This was achieved through research through design by establishing a design strategy that uses the findings of investigations and applies them to a prototype application. Developers of online content for gifted children may benefit from this research.

As an initial investigation a survey was conducted about how gifted New Zealand primary school children are using online applications. It was assumed following the literature review that online applications would appeal to gifted children if they teach a new skill, have multiplayer functionality and address higher order thinking skills. Basic design characteristics of the most popular gaming websites amongst gifted children (from the survey) were then used to inform the design strategy and to develop the prototype online application typozilla.

Key findings were retrieved through observation of gifted children using typozilla. The majority of children observed were especially enthusiastic seeing other players' avatars within multiplayer areas and competing against each other. They enjoyed learning a new skill (which was touch-typing) and engaging in creative tasks. In interviews all gifted children confirmed that they perceived the typozilla design as appealing.

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