is testament to the international flavour of O’Sullivan’s *Historical Dictionary of Literature* that it suggests the possibility of such future scholarly endeavour. Readers of children’s literature from all over the world could fully appreciate both our cultural differences and our shared connections through our passion for books and matters to do with childhood. Like Jan Comenius’ encyclopaedia *Orbis Sensualium Pictus*, it could offer us the visible world in words and pictures. I appreciate that, just like Dr Johnson’s ground-breaking dictionary, it would probably be at least nine-years in the making, and a number of assistants would have to be employed for what would admittedly be a mammoth task. I would like to be the first offer my services. I feel certain that Professor O’Sullivan could lead the team that produces it!

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‘Reading ought to be fun and books ought to be loved.’ I borrow this opener from Cornelia Rémi and her chapter, ‘Reading as playing’ in the anthology *Emergent Literacy: Children’s Books from 0 to 3*. Indeed, the fun-and-love-aspects of reading are all too often neglected in favour of the technical and ‘useful’ aspects of reading, especially when it comes to young children. For although there is consensus that reading is good for children, that it is a skill necessary later in life, the books themselves or the ways in which children engage with them have only recently attracted the attention of researchers. It is by focusing on book genres for the very young rather than on literacy *per se* that the present volume breaks new ground. To paraphrase the title of the collection one could call it ‘emergent research: children’s books, from 0 to 3’.

Some of the chapters are devoted to what Kümmerling-Meibauer aptly calls ‘early concept-books’, that is, books that present one concept at a time, usually a noun like ‘ball’ or ‘mama’, but sometimes also verbs, such as ‘to make’ or ‘to have’ and adjectives, such as ‘hot’ or ‘big’. Early concept books are often the first books that children encounter, usually between 12 and 18 months of age. Ostensibly these are books that teach concepts, or words—the child’s primary lexicon—but, as some of the chapters show, there is much more to it than that. The visual codes that have to be mastered in order to decipher the simplest early concept book are baffling. The child must be able to differentiate between figure and background, recognise that lines, points, colours are inseparable parts of the depicted object, realise that a two-dimensional picture stands for a three-dimensional object, and, finally, master the stylised way in which objects are represented (no colour modulation, black outlines, use of negative space etc). Early concept books also require (and teach) sequentiality. The pages are turned and new things unfold. Moreover, early concept books, establish
patterns of contrast or similarity. When words have been introduced in later early concept books, a connection is made between words and images. And, finally, as Kümmerling-Meibauer puts it, ‘children learn that words and images represent objects’ (111). This is no mean feat. As is shown in one of the other contributions, there are actually striking similarities between the designs in picturebooks and in modern art (Deppner). The cognitive leap required by small children is no doubt just as daunting (if not more so) than what is asked by someone trying to decode the most sophisticated piece of art.

Another book genre for the very young would be the *wimmelbook* (from the German *Wimmelbücher*) analysed by Cornelia Rémi. ‘Wimmel’ can be translated as ‘teeming’, or ‘swarming with’. Typically a wimmelbook consists of large spreads presenting landscape panoramas swarming with people involved in different activities. There are no accompanying words, and there is no organising plot principle at work, although there is usually some thematic coherence or unity of content, such as ‘winter sports’. Although children usually come in contact with wimmelbooks between one and two years of age, they often continue to read them until they start school. Rémi writes: ‘wimmelbooks are a threshold or bridge genre, varied enough to accompany children through many stages on their path to literacy’ (116). Thus, wimmelbooks represent a departure from the early concept books on the threshold to picturebooks containing a story, yet in some ways even more advanced than a picturebook narrative. One of the attractions of the wimmelbook is that its ‘plenitude reflects the complicated composition of the world in general, which demands certain strategies for coping with its wealth’ (120). She goes on to say, ‘wimmelbooks can be described as models of the world and vice versa’ (121). Children (and adults) reading wimmelbooks are tacitly invited to create narratives and play out some of the endless possibilities presented.

Although Rémi is concerned with the prototypical wimmelbook, for instance represented by the work of Ali Mitgutsch, one can certainly see how some of the critical insights gained could be applied to books that share many of the salient features of the wimmelbook. I am thinking of Richard Scarry’s encyclopedic spreads from town and countryside, teeming with often unrelated incidents and characters. My hunch is that children ‘read’ these books before they can actually read the words, and use them in the same way as wimmelbooks. There are of course numerous other hybrid forms. Rémi mentions Martin Handford’s puzzle books, where the aim is to find specific objects hidden within pictures loaded with details. This, as Rémi points out, requires, a rather different reading strategy from that which is used for the busy images in a wimmelbook. However, sometimes search-books or I-Spy-books rely less on the finding and puzzle-solving than on the kind of aesthetic pleasure derived from contemplation. In Sven Nordqvist’s *Var är min syster?* (Where is my sister?), for instance, the lavish and detailed spreads invite readings that are parallel and quite independent of the extremely simple storyline and scant words. A final example of children’s literature/culture that resembles wimmelbooks would be detail-crazed jigsaw-puzzles, such as the ones created by Jan van Haasteren
(The Kitchen, The Castle Siege). In their completed form, these jigsaw-puzzles make up perfect wimmel-scenes, but there is of course the added challenge of solving the puzzle, which makes them suitable for an older audience – 7–12 years – and thus a later stage in children’s literacy development.

Several of the other contributions to Emergent Literacy are just as thought provoking and inspiring as the ones I have treated here at some length. It is a collection that provides ideas and concepts – maybe one could even call it a ‘very-late-concept-book’, to paraphrase one very central term. Emergent Literacy broadens the concept of literacy in a useful way, and initiates research into children’s early literature – as literature.

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The study of children’s literature and culture has been experiencing a renaissance, with vital new work proliferating across many areas of interest. As claimed in the introduction of Keywords for Children’s Literature, since about 1970 scholarship in children’s literature has brought together people from multiple fields, such as literature, education, library and information science, cultural studies, and media studies, rendering the expression ‘Children’s Literature’ a kind of umbrella term which encompasses a wide range of disciplines, genres, and media. Indeed, one of the challenges of children’s literature is that scholars from different disciplines use the same term in many different ways. As a result, meanings can be blurred and cross-disciplinary: a term that is used in the field of library science, for example, may have a slightly different meaning when used by scholars in the field of education.

The editors have tried to map the scholarship of children’s literature by presenting 49 short terminological discussions on the most essential terms and concepts of the field, focusing their attention on meanings which are vital for those who read, teach, and study literature for children. These essays, ranging from ‘Aesthetics’ to ‘Young Adult’, are written by a multidisciplinary cast of scholars who explore the vocabulary central to the study of children’s literature. In the spirit of Raymond Williams’ seminal Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society (1976), this book can be considered as a snapshot of a vocabulary of children’s literature scholarship that continuously changes, expands, and is ever unfinished. Readers are encouraged not to start at the first entry and read through to the last, but rather to follow the association suggested by each keyword. Readers can consider this book as a sort of mind map of children’s literature, where they can pick a word and follow the chain of connections wherever it leads them.

The authors admit that, as they chose the words they think are crucial to the study of children’s literature and culture themselves, readers are likely to