

CENTRE FOR INNOVATION AND RESEARCH IN CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

ESW Open Seminar Series

Monday 11 February, 4.30-6pm
Room 255, Bramber House, University of Sussex

Hannah Field, Lecturer in Victorian Literature,
School of English, University of Sussex &
Kiera Vaclavik, Professor of Children's Literature and
Childhood Culture, Queen Mary, University of London

Not Only Dressed but Dressing: New approaches to children's clothing

A vibrant, buoyant, and lucrative part of the global fashion industry, children's dress is also harnessed extensively in museums, schools and heritage sites as a way of bringing histories, ideas, and cultural artefacts to life. Frequent and vociferous popular debates which regularly erupt in relation to specific outfits, practices, occasions, or marketing decisions indicate that children's dress today is being taken more seriously than ever before. What children wear reveals fundamental adult assumptions about what children need or deserve, but also affords key insights into children's own lived experiences and attitudes. Despite this, scholars and museum practitioners to date have given little sustained attention to children's dress.

In this seminar, Hannah Field and Kiera Vaclavik will discuss their own research into children's clothing, including fancy dress, the first paper-doll books, and the history of Lewis Carroll's *Alice* as a fashion icon. They will also describe their plans for a scholarly network to revitalize the study of children's dress by exploring the relationship between children's clothing, design, agency, and creativity, in addition to the socio-historical evidence provided by children's clothes.

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