

Alice in Computerland? Kids' book explores idea

By DINITA JAMES

For a 4-year-old, Catie is quite a heroine.

Her dad, Fred D'Ignazio, published his first children's book in December, with Catie as the protagonist.

Although a bit older and blonde instead of brunette, Katie in *Katie and the Computer* is Catie D'Ignazio.

The Katie in the book even wears Catie's favorite color—red.

D'Ignazio, a Ph.D. candidate in the computer science department at UNC, says he believes computers will come into common use in the home in the not-so-distant future, and children should become familiar with them at an early age.

His book combines educational information and fantasy and the brilliantly colored illustrations of Stan Gilliam, a part-time secretary in the American studies department at UNC.

The Alice-in-Wonderland plot includes Katie as the heroine and a villain, The Bug, in an adventurous tale of Katie's fall through the computer screen into the incredible land inside.

D'Ignazio credits his wife, Janet, who is transportation director of Chapel Hill, with the idea for the story. He says she made an idle remark one day wondering what would happen if Catie

fell into their home computer.

From her toddler days, Catie would sit on his lap and type on the computer keys, D'Ignazio says.

As the book developed, D'Ignazio says Catie was his biggest critic. She listened to two versions of the story every night before bed, and memorized the words.

"I had written in a line that read, 'The Bug pulled them closer and closer to his gaping jaws,' but Catie didn't know what the word 'gaping' meant," he says. "One night she recited 'hungry jaws,' and that's how it is in the book."

Catie also had a disagreement with the publisher. D'Ignazio says the publisher urged him to change the spelling of Catie to Katie to insure correct pronunciation.

"She wrote three angry letters to the publisher, with all these ugly pictures," D'Ignazio says. "She thought they were changing her name, too."

"We're still having some disagreement now," he says. "Whenever she autographs a book, she spells her name with a K."

Catie, er, Katie and her father will be autographing books at a 7-10 p.m. wine and cheese party Friday and a 10 a.m.-noon children's party Saturday at the Foundation Bookstore.

Dinita James is editor of *Weekender*.



Harold Moore

Catie at computer with father (right) and Gilliam

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