

Research Collections in College and University Libraries

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MOST AMERICANS, IF ASKED to name the various components of an American college or university, would mention a library. Few, even among librarians, would be likely to name historical collections of children's literature among the various types of special collections to be expected in institutions of higher learning. Yet there are more than forty colleges and universities in the United States which have recognized and identified the unique value of their library holdings of historical children's literature. Undoubtedly there are more which, for one reason or another, do not appear in Lee Ash's guide *Subject Collections: A Guide to Special Book Collections*¹ or in Carolyn W. Field's *Subject Collections in Children's Literature*,² both of which were used in preparing this article.

The experience of working with one of the oldest collections of historical children's literature, in the Elizabeth Nesbitt Room of the Graduate School of Library and Information Sciences at the University of Pittsburgh, and the research done for the present article have revealed the impossibility of comparing juvenile collections without asking some questions. What, for instance, does the term *children's literature* include? What constitutes a collection of historical children's literature? Must it aim to be representative of the work of all major writers and illustrators of a chosen period who intended their work specifically for children? Must the collection be housed, or at least shelved, as a separate entity? If so, examples of such a collection can be found in few U.S. colleges or universities. A wide variety of collections, housed in a variety of ways, must be

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considered in order to derive a useful and accurate picture of the country's resources in this area.

An important dimension is added to such a survey if it includes, as it ought, books for children within important collections like those of the Beinecke Library at Yale, the Widener and Houghton libraries at Harvard and the Lilly Library at Indiana University. These libraries offer exhibits and serve as resources for students of major authors, such as Stevenson, Barrie, Twain, and Kipling, who wrote for children as well as adults. Even collections of Bunyan, Defoe or Swift might legitimately fall within the definition of "children's literature," although they are not considered here. Chapbooks, toy books, a collection on the circus, and other subjects too numerous to mention extend the field and are useful. Collections with a geographical focus, such as collections of works by authors who were born or lived in a particular state, frequently include children's books.

Indeed, the criterion for inclusion in a list of collections of historical children's literature may simply be its usefulness, or potential usefulness, to students of children's literature and related areas of study. The field is constantly being examined from fresh points of view and is open to exploration for advanced study in English, comparative literature, sociology, fine arts, history, education, religion, psychology, and child study. Already numerous scholars and critics have written essays and published dissertations showing the link between the social values of adults and the books given to children of each era. Doctoral theses have led to books on theorists like Rousseau who broke old patterns of thought and established new concepts of childhood and children's needs. There is scholarly interest in books written for children by authors who have given self-portraits of their own early, formative years, thus throwing light on the creative process. Researchers interested in such fields of study are drawn to collections in colleges and universities that include pertinent material which is often difficult to find outside of special collections.

The range of possible subjects for study is suggested by the records of the Kerlan and Hess collections (University of Minnesota) which list monographs, articles, theses, and starred papers for the master's degree based on research in the collections. No less than seventy-nine projects by eighty-five researchers were recorded in 1976-77. Courses in elementary education accounted for another eighteen papers, and a course in the history of children's literature produced seven papers during the same period. The Kerlan and Hess collections are exceptionally accessible, well-publicized and effectively administered — factors which can greatly increase the utilization of special collections.

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In spite of the varying nature of the collections and the probability that a complete listing cannot be made, it is interesting to note the location of the collections which colleges and universities recognize as relevant to the study of the history of children's literature. The northeastern states have at least twenty-nine collections, the Midwest twenty-six, the West Coast four, the southern Atlantic states three, and the South two. However, such statistics have little validity unless the size and quality of each collection is also considered. Special names and subdivisions within a collection can create discrepancies in any assessment. It is most interesting to note, however, the relatively unrecognized interest and wealth of resources in the history of children's literature which exists in the Midwest as compared to the famous libraries along the east and west coasts.

In the libraries which responded to questions asked in the preparation of this article, there are at least twenty-four collections centered around individual authors, eighteen on special subjects or types of books, and twenty-one which are described as covering the whole field of children's literature. In these general collections, the nineteenth century is the best represented, ten libraries have substantial holdings from the eighteenth century, and three specifically mention books from the seventeenth century. One exhibition of children's books included a thirteenth-century book. It should be noted that English Victorians are particularly well represented in American college and university libraries, while the reverse is not true in England.

In most libraries, collections on the history of children's literature have been acquired either as gifts or purchases, with gifts far outnumbering purchases. Colleges and universities seldom give high priority to expenditures in this field, partly because it is not one that clamors for attention among today's pressing demands, and partly because donors have been generous with books and funds. The donors' motives, often expressed in their deeds of gift, have been to ensure proper care for treasured books and other memorabilia, and to keep them together as a significant collection. Often the feelings of a loyal alumnus or alumna for his/her college or university are an important factor. From descriptive brochures a clear picture emerges of donors who have collected books by authors they loved in their youth. In a few instances core collections have been systematically amplified by gift or purchase for the support of particular courses in the history of children's literature, taught either in a graduate library school or an English department.

Sometimes the source of the collection is in doubt, as in the case of the core collection now housed in the Elizabeth Nesbitt Room at the

University of Pittsburgh. In the introduction to her *History of Children's Literature*, Elva S. Smith in 1937 dated the acquisition of the collection as "some thirty years ago," citing the source as "Mr. Charles Welsh, a former member of the firm of Griffith, Farran & Co.," and the instigating force as "the foresight of Frances Jenkins Olcott."³ These clues, however, failed to specify important information, such as who paid for the purchase. It may have been Andrew Carnegie, who in about 1907 gave an endowment to produce an income of \$7000 for the support of the Training School for Children's Librarians⁴ and for the development of "a special reference library." Was this "special reference library" the collection of 2000 rare books indentified by Elva S. Smith as "representing chiefly the period between 1760 and 1835?"⁵

The existence of the collection in Pittsburgh was unknown to almost everyone except those at the library school itself, and its significance went unrecognized even there. Elizabeth Nesbitt said that d'Alté Welch once came to see the collection and commented, "I don't think you people know what you have here." As recently as 1978, when the collection had become better known, Justin Schiller commented to this writer that he had always wondered what Charles Welsh had done with his library. Personal correspondence with R.A. Brimmell, the literary executor of Sydney Roscoe of Hastings, Sussex, brought this response: "I was most interested to hear that you have the Charles Welsh collection at Pittsburgh—they were collected in the days when few were interested in juveniles and they could be picked up for next to nothing." Even so, it is not certain whether Pittsburgh has *the* Charles Welsh collection or only *a* Charles Welsh collection. Other libraries could undoubtedly report similar cases in which the exact circumstances of acquisition are unknown because of documents now lost, or events perhaps never recorded.

In some instances documentation on the collections is ample. Publications about their historical collections of children's literature came, on request, from ten colleges and universities which greatly helped in the preparation of this article. Handsome brochures have appeared in connection with special exhibitions, and in a few cases catalogs have been published. An example is the catalog for the Eloise Ramsey Collection of Literature for Young People.⁶ The Shaw Collection of Childhood in Poetry at Florida State University has generated a catalog of ten volumes.⁷ In recent correspondence, Assistant Curator James D. Birchfield wrote that "enough material is nearly on hand now [1978] for another supplement." This catalog must have set a publication record for a single collection, and has been made possible by the generosity and devotion of the "volun-

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tary curator," John M. Shaw.⁸ The Shaw collection is unusual in that its donor continues to serve in an active capacity.

Who is responsible for the care of the collections of academic libraries? There may be no one person solely responsible; there may be a curator in charge of a rare book room where children's books are shelved with a more general collection. In a few cases there is a curator, an assistant curator and a part-time staff working in a room with facilities for displays and reading, and with closed stacks at hand. Replies to the inquiries of the writer in preparation for this paper often included a comment that the library would like to catalog its collection, extend it, or publish articles and monographs based on its holdings as soon as time, staff and money became available. Even with existing limitations, admirable publishing has been done by librarians or curators of the collection, graduate students, and bibliophiles who had loaned their personal collections for special exhibitions and later donated them to the library.

Publication has been one benefit of historical collections of children's books in colleges and universities, and may itself generate funds, as the catalog for the Shaw collection has done. The Lucile Clarke Memorial Children's Library at Central Michigan University has begun a monograph series; two titles have been issued at this writing.⁹ A program of publishing involves astute planning and unlimited zeal from a trained staff; both are evidently available in a number of colleges and universities where the role of children's books as literature is recognized.

Attractive brochures on these collections, produced for special occasions, serve as mementos and often become collector's items themselves. Examples are "From *Tom Thumb* to *Harry Heedless*: Children's Books Before 1801 in the Edgar W. and Faith King Early Juvenile Collection in the Miami University Library" (1971), and an exhibition catalog "To Edify, Educate and Entertain: American Children's Books, 1820-1860" from the Watkinson Library at Trinity College, Hartford, Conn. (1977). The Encyclopaedia Britannica Historical Collection of Books for Children at the University of Chicago has produced a catalog which includes an illuminating introductory essay for an exhibition titled "Science in Nineteenth-Century Children's Books" (1966). Some exhibition catalogs have been generously funded and provide facsimile illustrations in black and white. An example, "Pearls, Amber, and Painted Snail Shells," comes from the University of Connecticut Library (1975). The title, taken from Gedike's *Gesammelte Schulschriften* (1789), suggests the varying quality of literature published for children as well as the variety represented in most exhibitions.

The potential for research in collections which specifically cover the history of children's literature has barely been touched, but a few titles will indicate the range of work that has been done. An early example among catalogs was William C. Lane's *Catalogue of English and American Chap-books and Broadside Ballads in Harvard College Library*.¹⁰ Elva S. Smith's *History of Children's Literature*, cited earlier, was based on Carnegie Library School's collection. Richard L. Darling's *The Rise of Children's Book Reviewing in America, 1865-1881*, published in 1968, was based on a thesis done at the University of Michigan.¹¹ Sylvia W. Patterson acknowledged the cooperation of the universities of North Carolina and Florida, and Columbia, Yale, Princeton, Duke, Harvard, and Florida State universities libraries, which "were kind enough to lend or provide" copies of books for her *Rousseau's 'Émile' and Early Children's Literature*.¹² For his *A Bibliography of American Children's Books Printed Prior to 1821*, d'Alté Welch located titles in colleges and universities nationwide, including many institutions not mentioned in the present study.¹³ A wide range of bibliographies would be helpful in the study of the history of children's literature and, it is hoped, will appear in the future. Unpublished dissertations, although plentiful, are relatively inaccessible.

Most college or university librarians responding to the present inquiry indicated that comparatively little use has been made of their special collections. When a collection only covers a general period and has no specific strengths, scholars generally look to the important collections at libraries like those of Harvard, Yale, Columbia, and Indiana universities and the University of California. Another factor limiting the scholarly study of these academic collections is that doctoral students in library science tend toward dissertations on library service rather than literary research. Finally, the great collections available in many public libraries, as well as the Library of Congress and the Pierpont Morgan and Huntington libraries, welcome serious students and outnumber those in academic libraries.

At the same time, however, maximum use of rare children's books is not necessarily ideal. Today's student may think of unlimited access as the only acceptable library policy, but for rare books and historic collections preservation must be the first priority. Use implies wear, which for old and fragile books means being worn out. Current custom equates this with replacement. But even relatively new books, once out of print, are difficult to replace. Very old and rare books may be impossible to replace, and this is especially true of children's books. Beatrix Potter once said to Anne Carroll Moore: "I have been thinking of the importance of saving books. . . . Books are soon lost or forgotten and children's books are the

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most perishable of all. It makes me happy to feel mine are being saved in libraries overseas."¹⁴

Preserving books is a goal not compatible with unlimited access. There is a somewhat apocryphal story of a hapless freshman who walked into the rare books library of an eminent university and was told by the attendant, "I'm sorry, but this library is for the use of scholars."¹⁵ Whether or not this actually happened, students and faculty need to sympathize when policies for rare books seem restrictive; college and university collections are especially vulnerable. When an entire class wants to handle a book assigned for study, the wear is multiplied far beyond what the same book would suffer during several years in the rare book room of a public library.

A corollary of this is the desirability of training students in the care, conservation and restoration of rare books. The Elizabeth Nesbitt Room at the University of Pittsburgh has been extraordinarily fortunate in having Jean Gunner, bookbinder and conservator of Carnegie-Mellon University, as teacher and consultant. The curator of the University of Pittsburgh's special collection was trained by Gunner and has in turn trained students in the simple, basic processes of book conservation. However, the first rule with rare books is to do nothing rather than risk doing something wrong. Book conservation and restoration cannot be embarked upon without careful guidance.

Historical children's books on university and college campuses can be acquired and conserved without cost by searching the circulating collections. Biographical, autobiographical and critical material about authors and artists of juvenile books can often be found there. Books which seldom circulate in the large general collection may eventually be stored in a warehouse or lost through exchange programs or even outright destruction. A better disposition of these books is to transfer them to a collection of historical children's literature, where they will be used and preserved. Reprint catalogs show that more material of this kind is being made available each year, but prices are high and delivery uncertain. An interested curator or other faculty member who is aware of the opportunity can search out and request the transfer of these books to the special collection. The rewards can be great; for example, the British scholar Walter Oakeshott identified the manuscript of Malory's works in the college library at Winchester where it had lain unrecognized for several hundred years. Oakeshott drew a moral from this find: "Don't hesitate to glean in fields which others have worked — or at least walked through

— before you.”¹⁶ Two collections surveyed reported utilizing this method of acquisition.

Acquisitions from sources outside the college or university depend largely on the awareness of bibliophiles and others who have an interest in children's literature. A majority of letters received in response to the writer's inquiry indicate that gifts and entire collections have come unsolicited and that no additions are planned. Some institutions plan to establish a rare book room where children's books would be shelved with other collections under the care of one curator, bibliographer or research librarian. A few libraries have endowments to fill perceived gaps in their collections and use these funds to purchase titles as they become available. Memorial gifts and yearly appeals to friends-of-the-library groups help to build and maintain some collections. A few collections with dependable budgets make purchases to move toward stated goals, such as the support of existing courses in the history of children's literature. Some librarians responded to the inquiry with detailed information about acquisitions of historic children's books, indicating an apparent reliance on the bibliographies of Darton, Mrs. E.M. Field, Muir, Elva Smith, Meigs, Haviland, Coughlan and others for guidance.

Some examples of responses from institutions surveyed will serve to show typical situations. Francis J. Gagliardi, Assistant Director of Library Services in the Elihu Burritt Library at Central Connecticut State College, wrote:

Our children's historical collection . . . was established through a combination of purchases, gifts and books already owned by the library. For the past few years very little material has been added to this collection due to severe financial restrictions, as well as to the tremendous increase in the costs of children's books. . . . Until recently this collection was not properly cataloged. It was decided to go through the entire collection in order to straighten out some howling errors. Outside of a mention in *Phaedrus* magazine, few individuals outside of this campus are aware of our children's historical collection.

From Houghton Library at Harvard, Deborah B. Kelley of the Houghton Reading Room wrote: “The union card catalog in Widener Library, which lists books found in all Harvard libraries, includes approximately 700-800 entries for Barrie, 1500 for Carroll, 500-600 for Henty, 5500 for Kipling, 700-800 for Lamb and 3600 for Twain. Early editions are housed in this library.” Eleanor M. Garvey, Curator of Printing and

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Graphic Arts at Houghton, adds information about the Edward Lear collection: "Literally thousands of his landscape watercolors, as well as many drawings for the nonsense books . . . and also a complete run of his books . . . are shelved in closed stacks, which are carefully controlled for temperature and humidity. The material is in considerable demand, and most of the books published these days on Edward Lear make use of it."

Robert Soka, Special Collections Librarian of the Milner Library at Illinois State University, reports: "Our Children's Literature Collection . . . originated in the interest shown by the English and education departments to teach courses in children's literature. The collection is shelved in the closed stacks of the Rare Book Room, and about fifty percent of it is cataloged. Little use is made of the collection and until the entire collection is cataloged, few purchases will be made."

Certain breathtaking items come to light in some of these letters. Geneva Warner, head of the Department of Reader Services, Indiana University, describes holdings on several authors, beginning with "James M. Barrie — substantial holdings, 90 volumes printed plus *Peter Pan* ms. in the hand of Barrie and presented to Maude Adams." For many bibliophiles and students of children's literature, this one manuscript would justify a trip across the continent to the Lilly Library. Warner listed the categories of children's literature at the Lilly Library: (1) first editions of great books; (2) collections of authors who are identified (rightly or wrongly) as writers for children, e.g., Andrew Lang; (3) popular literature (early nineteenth-century "Cries," chapbooks and dime novels).

The Dorothy Cross collection at Kent State University has an appealing focus. It represents "a 'mix' of books available in what might have been a typical home library of a cultured American family of modest income in the first two decades of the twentieth century." This description comes from a master's research paper which comments that "the utility of this research collection as a resource in the study of early children's literature has not been fully realized because complete bibliographical access to the collection has not been available in the catalog of the Kent State University Library."¹⁷ This theme runs through many of the responses.

R. Russell Maylone, Curator of Special Collections at Northwestern University, provided a "random sampling" of titles from an impressive collection of 641 chapbooks and 497 English broadside ballads, all "fully cataloged and available for use."

The correspondence offers glimpses of the relationship between devoted librarians and the books in their collections. Edgar W. King, "librar-

ian at Miami University for some thirty-four years," is like John Mackay Shaw in that he gave his and his wife's collection of 6600 books and magazines to the university upon his retirement. Some personal visits and conversations have shown that this kind of involvement is not uncommon.

William Miles, bibliographer at the Lucile Clarke Memorial Children's Library, Central Michigan University, described in detail an active program which demonstrates the uses to which the collections may be and are being put: "Exhibitions, which have thus far included the works of Kate Greenaway and Howard Pyle, the Oz books, and American editions of *Robinson Crusoe*, are designed not only to introduce to students and researchers available resources for study, but also to attract and teach those whose interest in the history of children's literature is purely recreational. Aimed at the student or scholar in the discipline, however, is the monograph series which we publish." Of note was Miles's report that the library possesses the 'Royal Alice,' a copy of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* which Lewis Carroll presented to Princess Beatrice, daughter of Queen Victoria.

Elma Wiacek, Technical Services, Southern Connecticut State College, responded to the author's inquiry with detailed personal knowledge of the history of the Carolyn Sherwin Bailey Historical Collection of Children's Books. She commented that the Hilton C. Buley Library has been able to gather a collection of duplicate copies for student use: "It is sad to note that through general disregard and improper handling, this little collection of books is fast declining and just plain disappearing. We have had a few more serious students who have actually used the Carolyn Sherwin Bailey collection. For the most part, the working collection has met the needs of the students here at the college."

Marjorie Wynne, research librarian of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale, has written an article entitled, "Manuscripts of Children's Literature in the Beinecke Library."¹⁸ Of the Beinecke, which possesses a strong collection on George MacDonald, Ruskin, Walter Crane, etc., Wynne responded: "Our children's books are not kept together but are distributed among the authors we collect. . . . Some items we have bought; some have been given to us. Just recently we had an exhibition of children's books (prepared by our junior staff)." Books for that exhibition were chosen with a view of children's literature as world literature. For example, the first item was a copy of *Le Livre de Lancelot du Lac, Part III*, published in France about 1280 and attributed to Walter Map, who flourished about 1200. The exhibition was not confined to first, or even early editions, but clearly represented the choices of lively

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and perceptive individuals who chose books for their inherent beauty or other interests. The *Yale University Library Gazette*, like similar journals in colleges and universities, has published articles about individual authors, artists and types of juvenile literature. Dime novels of the nineteenth century, for example, have received considerable attention.

Older institutions which early achieved scholarly recognition are especially rich in their collections of children's literature. Columbia University acted as a lodestone for the treasures of bibliophiles; it contains the Annie E. Moore Collection of Illustrated Children's Books; the personal collection of F.J. Harvey Darton, British literary scholar and author on the history of children's literature; and the outstanding Plimpton collection of hornbooks. A letter from Kenneth A. Lohf, Librarian for Rare Books and Manuscripts at Columbia, refers to a representative collection of Lewis Carroll but notes that a major collection is in the Fales Library at New York University.

This article cannot pretend to do justice to the scope of the collections on which the writer has received information. Personal visits were made to a few college and university libraries in the northeastern states, and in each case the holdings proved to be more extensive and varied than available listings had indicated. Housing for the books indicated administrative willingness to provide ample, dignified and even beautiful quarters when the importance of the collections has been publicized and impressed on the administration. Even when the collections must be maintained with minimal staff and budget, the enthusiasm and devotion of librarians and curators in this field is obvious through their activities, publications and correspondence.

The potential scope of college and university work in the field may be seen from projects underway in California. Special mention of the California collections is made here because they represent particular awareness of the importance of historical children's books and because of the perceptive scholarly uses being made of them. The expected new edition of Carolyn Field's *Subject Collections in Children's Literature* will undoubtedly show valuable work going on elsewhere that is not so well recognized. At Berkeley, the Mark Twain Papers, housed in a suite of offices in the Bancroft Library, are being edited by Frederick Anderson and published by the University of California Press. Anderson stated, "New editions of all the previously published works are being edited to restore to them the author's exact intention, purged of editorial and publishers' revisions and interventions as well as inadvertent errors introduced

by typesetters." The impact of this mammoth task will suggest new inquiries of value to students of other authors.

A letter from the University of California at Davis enclosed copies of catalog cards for collections on Robert Louis Stevenson and Rudyard Kipling. Pat McDonnell of the university library commented that "material written for children in the nineteenth century is very articulate and therefore not easily distinguished from the adult material"; this helpful insight, basic to the perception of historical collections of children's literature, is one shared by a number of librarians answering the inquiry. Catalog cards at Davis note first editions, describe bindings and identify illustrators. McDonnell continued: "As for background on the collections, in 1962 the University of California purchased 52,000 volumes of rare books from the heirs of the British politician and collector, Isaac Foot. The purpose of purchasing the Foot Library was to benefit the smaller campuses, Davis, Riverside and Santa Barbara."

The largest of the University of California's historical collections of children's books is described in an article by Wilbur Jordan Smith, former curator of Special Collections at UCLA, which cites other extensive purchases: "In the summer of 1954 the library bought from the Beauchamp Bookshop of London its entire Catalogue 19," which included not only books but "parlor games and a variety of delicious ephemera often associated with children's books, such as peep-shows, engraved lottery sheets, juvenile dramas, protean views, and bookmarks in multicolored silks. . . . About one year later two lots of books, totaling a little more than 500 volumes altogether, were bought from Hamill & Barker of Chicago."¹⁹ The article lists other large purchases which indicate that foresighted Californians took timely action to put the University of California among the first in the nation for resources in the history of children's literature.

This writer is indebted to all the librarians, curators and research librarians who responded to requests for information. When the Houghton Library was opened at Harvard, President James B. Conant observed that: "One of the functions of a university is to act as a guardian of the cultural riches of the past. Our libraries . . . serve only in part our own students and our staff. To a large measure they are of benefit to the much greater world of scholars. . . . We are the servants of a community that extends far beyond these academic walls — our responsibilities transcend both the immediate aims of this institution of learning and the days in which we live."²⁰ Children's literature is part of "the cultural riches of the past," and it is fitting that American institutions of higher learning are giving it due recognition.

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