

Scholarly Research About Historical Children's Books Published in Library Science, English, Social History, Psychology, and Art

SARA INNIS FENWICK

THE PURPOSE OF THIS paper is to examine the nature of research in historical children's books published in the United States. Significant aspects of this research to be assessed are: (1) topics selected for research, (2) types of research conducted, and (3) general quality and quantity of the research. A few studies that have established patterns for scholarly research in the past and that may serve as models for future investigations will be examined in some detail.

A cross-disciplinary approach is usually the most rewarding for the study of any aspect of children's literature, and it seems essential to research in the historical field. The interests, skills, knowledge, and disciplinary approaches of scholars in the humanities and the social and behavioral sciences, as well as those in library science, have helped establish broad dimensions for the understanding of the development and significance of children's literature.

The breadth of the potential field for productive research obviously presents some dilemmas in assessing research output in historical children's books. The history of children's books produced and published in the subject areas of library science, English, social history, psychology, and art will be examined here. Historical children's books will generally be interpreted as those published before 1920. The bulk of the research studies considered are those completed since 1950, in the form of dissertations and published studies undertaken by individuals.

Sara Innis Fenwick is Professor Emerita of the Graduate Library School, University of Chicago.

The term *scholarly* begs some interpretation. It will be used here as a descriptor of doctoral dissertations accepted by universities and listed in standard bibliographical sources. Admittedly, a considerable volume of interesting theory, speculation, literature survey, and bibliographical activity in the field of historical children's books is published in scholarly journals, professional and popular periodicals, and in papers prepared for conferences and symposia. While some citing of articles in these kinds of publications may be of interest, they will not be dealt with here in any attempt to survey the quantity or quality of writing. This omission is due in part to the difficulty of access and to the variation in level of authority. A few schools have produced some master's theses during the time period covered that represent significant contributions to scholarly investigation. Only a few of these can be cited because of problems in locating them.

This essay is not intended to be a definitive summary or bibliography of all available research. This writer apologizes for the inevitable oversight here of many — and some important — published items, but hopes that a state-of-the-art description will be useful to scholars and bibliographers planning research, and in the development, stimulation and dissemination of such studies.

SOURCES FOR IDENTIFYING RESEARCH

It was no surprise that the first major problem encountered in preparing this article was identifying the sources of access to existing published and unpublished research, and assessing the usefulness of these sources. It is expected that an amount of time and effort will be expended in inevitable but sometimes very useful drudgery when dealing with scholarly research from several disciplines, each with its own format and its own bibliographical apparatus. The compilation of a comprehensive bibliography awaits further search and organization. In this case, manual search started with several sources that have greatly facilitated access to the research in this area by identifying and ordering it into a usable format. All of these sources are fairly recent and interdisciplinary.

Phaedrus: An International Journal of Children's Literature Research, edited by James Fraser and published twice a year, is successfully fulfilling its purposes of stimulating research, disseminating the products of research through reporting, and reviewing critically a wide variety of publications and significant contributions. Bibliographical sections list "Selected Dissertations," "Periodical Literature," and "Recent Bibliographies, Catalogues and Studies," covering the wide range of media. Articles about research in various media for children are up to date,

Scholarly Research

authoritatively written, interesting and well documented. The format is exceptionally attractive. This journal provides the most current access to a variety of types of research and studies in children's literature.

Research in Children's Literature: An Annotated Bibliography was compiled by Dianne L. Monson and Bette J. Peltola, and published by the International Reading Association in 1976. This bibliography is of singular usefulness because the majority of its 332 entries include brief resumes of information about subject, methodology and findings. Studies completed between 1960 and 1974 are covered. The descriptive notes are long enough in almost all cases to provide a screening tool for the manual searcher in identifying pertinent research. The majority of works cited are available from ERIC, and document film numbers are included. An important part of the publication is the keyword index, which has entries for the subject, characteristics of the sample, and type of evaluation. In the words of the compilers, the index "represents an attempt to identify common elements of a large number of studies dealing with literature for children and adolescents."¹

A third source of access to research is "A Working Bibliography of American Doctoral Dissertations in Children's and Adolescents' Literature, 1930-1971."² This is a bibliographical essay, covering a wide scope of doctoral dissertations produced during these forty-one years. The author describes the text as not a critical review, but an identification of studies, with brief comments on content and treatment.

Present-day research is greatly facilitated by *A Bibliography of American Children's Books Printed Prior to 1821* by d'Alté A. Welch, which lists nearly 1500 individual titles "designed to be read by children under fifteen years of age."³

Other sources examined manually include: *Dissertation Abstracts International; Library Literature; Dissertations in English and American Literature; Theses Accepted by American, British and German Universities, 1865-1964*, compiled by Lawrence McNamee;⁴ *Doctoral Dissertations in Library Science; Titles Accepted by Accredited Library Schools, 1930-1972*, compiled by David H. Eyman (Xerox University Microfilms, 1973); *Psychological Abstracts*; and *Art Index*. Since 1972 studies in children's literature, primarily those from the humanities, have been listed in the annual volumes of the Children's Literature Association (founded in 1973 by the Modern Language Association Group on Children's Literature), *Children's Literature*, edited by Francelia Butler. Two supplements to *Children's Literature; A Guide to Reference Sources*, com-

piled by Virginia Haviland (Washington, D.C., Library of Congress, 1972 and 1977) are welcome additions to sources of information.

Searches of the above sources yielded some citations to research which helped fill in the general outline of this state-of-the-art report. It remained, then, to examine the resources available through computer access to a national data base. On-line search through DIALOG (Information Retrieval Service of Lockheed Information Systems) was conducted by Julie Hurd of the University of Chicago Graduate Library School using the Digital Decuriter II terminal there.

Using several combinations of the subject terms *child*, *book*, *history*, and *literature*, a sample search was made of recent files of *Dissertation Abstracts International* (DAI), *Psychological Abstracts*, *Sociological Abstracts*, and ERIC. *Psychological Abstracts* reported thirty documents for the requested years under the heading "children's literature"; the two sample printouts were not relevant to this survey. *Sociological Abstracts* reported no entry under "children's literature," and the twenty-seven entries under "child-literature" proved to be literature about the child. Of the nine sample entries from DAI, six pertained to the study of historical books. ERIC reported ninety-one documents when the terms "childrens books" (no apostrophe) or "childrens literature" were used in conjunction with the terms "historical" or "literary history." Seven of the nine sample printouts proved to be relevant.

The sampling exercise identified the latter subject terms as the most useful, and ERIC as the most fruitful source for this particular survey. A printout of the ninety-one citations with complete descriptions was requested and received by mail in five days. This series of citations has been analyzed for number and source of doctoral studies on children's literature, for spread of subjects in the field, and for the number and type of studies relevant to research in the history of books for children.

The potential advantages — of time savings, cross-disciplinary access and volume of coverage — of the on-line computer search in surveying a field of literature and identifying relevant documents are obvious, but some comparisons of the system to manual searching can be made. The ninety-one documents in the ERIC data base retrieved under the headings noted above covered a range of at least thirty-nine subjects. A clustering of topics was most evident in the areas of minorities' images and the black experience (twenty-three theses), historical fiction (seven), and folktales (six). Formats of the documents included ten doctoral dissertations, one master's thesis, three reports of educational research projects, eleven monographs, nine conference papers, nineteen bibliographies, and

Scholarly Research

twenty-nine periodical articles. The dissertations were filed from Temple, Washington, Ohio State, Bowling Green, Columbia, Michigan State and Stanford universities and University of Nebraska.

At least 100 descriptors were suggested for the ERIC document citations and included specific subjects (e.g., Native American stereotypes); methodology (e.g., content analysis); theory (e.g., political socialization); developmental values (e.g., emotional adjustment); and behavioral characteristics (e.g., sex role). Following both manual and machine searches — accepting the fact that the inevitable gaps must be filled in later — the next major task was to compare the access routes for level of retrieval of relevant documents. This can be done with some confidence only for the ERIC documents as compared to *Phaedrus*, Monson and Peltola, Lukenbill and DAI. From these sources a working list of relevant doctoral dissertations was compiled to facilitate study of specific factors at work in the production of research. In addition, a list of articles in scholarly journals was examined, and a few selected master's theses noted.

Fifty-nine citations of doctoral studies dealing primarily with American children's books published before 1920 were selected for initial consideration. Of the ten dissertations retrieved from the ERIC document files, seven were selected as relevant. Four of the seven were cited in either Monson and Peltola, Lukenbill or DAI; one was in all three and another was in two. In other words, of the ninety-one documents available from ERIC, 7 percent were selected as relevant, and 3.3 percent were unique to ERIC.

The distribution of selected citations among the sources with greatest volume of coverage is as follows: ERIC, seven; Monson and Peltola, nine; *Phaedrus*, thirty-two; and DAI, eighteen. Obviously, judgments concerning percentages of overlap and uniqueness cannot be made from the specialized sample that this exercise represents, but some generalizations about search strategies might be suggested. What is not known is the percentage of all doctoral research made available by citations in DAI. In 1971 Lukenbill stated that the citations of unpublished dissertations in his paper were drawn exclusively from DAI (vol. 31, no. 7 through vol. 32, no. 6). He also referred to specialized bibliographies and earlier listings of dissertations in library science.⁵ Without a scientific check, it appears that an increasing number of research products are being made available through both DAI and ERIC, as well as through other national data bases, but the percentage of total research output accessible through these sources is still not large. It is probably true that this attempt to gain some control of the published and unpublished research in one segment of chil-

dren's literature underscores the present need for a number of specialized sources, and the small volume of duplicated entries in the several sources consulted suggests that there is no easy search strategy to follow at present.

Among the specialized bibliographies of children's literature, the largest number of studies relevant to the history of children's books in America was cited in *Phaedrus*. This is not surprising, since it is the most up-to-date and critical journal devoted to children's literature research. Thirty-two of the initial fifty-nine selected dissertations were drawn from this journal. The bibliographies of *Phaedrus* provide a greater degree of interdisciplinary coverage than any of the other access routes.

DESCRIPTIONS OF SELECTED DISSERTATIONS

A number of commentators have observed that research in the area of children's literature tends to cluster in certain types of investigations. Monson and Peltola noted some characteristics of studies written between 1960 and 1974: "The range of topics suggests the influence of a number of factors. Studies of the content of children's books indicate concern with racial and ethnic characterization, with the value structure presented in literature, and with analysis of the literary quality of children's books. In addition to an interest in the content of literature, researchers have been concerned with the influence of literature upon readers."⁶ To the scholar interested in historical books for children, it is apparent that several of these types of research are inappropriate. Of more interest is an examination of some of the subjects and research designs used by writers of the doctoral studies selected for review here. Categories of subjects and types of investigations mentioned in the following paragraphs are neither discrete nor schematic; they are merely descriptive terms to provide an overview of the questions about the history of children's books that are engaging the interest of scholars in the universities housing collections of historical books.

Limitations of both time and access to dissertations precluded review of all the relevant research. The list appended represents a major segment of those dissertations produced during the years 1950-77, including a few older ones that serve as landmark studies. Not all the studies on the list have been read in their entirety, but those given any extended comment have been read. Thirty-five doctoral studies, two master's theses, and one independent investigation are included in the list.

Research designs are dictated to a large extent by the type of evidence available, as well as by the questions to be asked of the evidence. Primarily,

Scholarly Research

the artifacts for the study of historical books for children are the surviving writings, books and periodicals, the various records of publishing, and the records of access points, such as libraries, bookshops, bibliographies, and catalogs. Recorded criticism and commentary add to the sources. Certain areas of research are obviously closed to the historian: experimental studies seeking attitudes toward and effects of exposure to literature, study of direct or casual influences upon literature by social, economic and political conditions, and, for the present, research in media other than printed literature for the child able to read. There are, however, fascinating subjects for study in street songs and games, nursery lore, toys, and most frequently, comic books. All of these areas of the child's communications environment are rewarding fields for study, but current activity, while having produced some landmark research (e.g., Peter Opie's), is not great in volume, and tends to exist as opening chapters of historical background to the absorbing contemporary problems in communications and their possible audience effects.

In spite of the fact that historical research about children's books is limited as to content and method compared with the entire field of children's literature and communications, the existing studies do seem concentrated in a more limited number of subject categories than expected. The topic groups represented in this survey are listed here in order of the frequency with which they appear:

- I. historical development of children's literature,
- II. issues in social history reflected in books for children,
- III. juvenile periodicals and their history,
- IV. genres of literature for children,
- V. individual authors and their works,
- VI. literary criticism related to historical books,
- VII. history of American children's book publishing, and
- VIII. illustration in books for children.

Due to the nature of the history of children's books, these groupings cannot be discrete in subject or method, and a few studies should be categorized under more than one heading because of the investigator's focus.

Dissertations in Group I

Inasmuch as the heading for this group, historical development of children's literature, is the broadest of all, it is not surprising that most of the studies examined fall into this subject category. Some notable dissertations in this category are those of Kennerly, MacLeod, Lee, Sloane, Kiefer

and Shaw (see appendix). At least three of these might logically be considered under another heading, but they represent more of an overall view than others.

William Sloane's *Children's Books in England and America in the Seventeenth Century* (based on his 1953 dissertation and issued as a trade book in 1955) is subtitled *A History and Checklist, Together With "The Young Christian's Library," the First Printed Catalogue of Books for Children*. Questions investigated include what books were written for children, which books were actually read, which were recommended for children, and which were not recommended. As a thorough, bibliographic survey this is an important contribution.

A more recent study in this same category, also published as a trade book, is MacLeod's "A Moral Tale: Children's Fiction and American Culture, 1820-1860" (1973). In this paper she examines the "new literature" for children of the nineteenth century as evidence of a developing concern for fostering a sense of moral responsibility in children. Books included in the study were original works of American fiction for children written between 1820 and 1860. The investigator recognized that the popularity of this literature was impossible to assess. The study's main thesis is that fiction for children written during these decades was a vehicle for the communication of many social and individual values of adults, and was intended to encourage devotion to an "ordered" society. The dissertation is thorough in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the individual titles and the characteristics of the book production as a whole. The literary criticism is good, but the social criticism suffers from MacLeod's straining to interpret each author's purposes.

The historical study that has probably had the most influence upon investigations into the sociocultural history of the American child is Monica Kiefer's *American Children Through Their Books, 1700-1835*. This title is that of the trade book based on the doctoral dissertation accepted by the University of Pennsylvania in 1943 and reissued in 1970. This is a study of the adult concept of childhood as revealed in books written for children during the years 1700-1835. The background is one of gradual change of the national climate from a waning Puritanism to a practical morality and secularism in all areas of life, and of the evolution of the child's status from submerged member of society to cherished object of concern. Kiefer's study has interested and stimulated at least one generation of researchers in children's literature, partly, of course, because it has been available in published form for thirty years and appears on major bibliographies of children's literature and reading. The scholar's

Scholarly Research

interest in the Kiefer study, however, is in her investigation of a period of history through unusual sources, and in the attention given to many aspects of the status and environment of the child's education, reading, recreation, manners, hygiene, and religion. Having drawn her definition of *status* from the social sciences, Kiefer documents it with quotations from source materials of publishing records, descriptions of physical characteristics of books, from primary sources of commentary on social conditions, and descriptive analyses of content. As a good historian, she does not mistake coexistence of factors for causality. All of these characteristics make this study one of the most useful titles for the student of child life and literature of the period covered.

The methodology used in the majority of the studies in this group is the historical, with techniques from other social science research appearing, particularly the descriptive survey and the qualitative content analysis. An example of the latter is the study by Jean Shaw. Shaw's dissertation is a study of the themes appearing most frequently in children's fiction during the century 1850-1964, with the premise that there is a relationship between the historical, social and cultural life of a society and the themes of stories written for children. Six categories of themes are cast largely in terms of developmental needs and tasks of children, and the popularity of these themes has been related to major social, economic and cultural events in American history. The breadth of the undertaking here is a handicap, and the combination of developmental needs, reading interests and descriptive categories clouds the thematic analysis. This lack of a clear-cut scheme is also the result of the universal and timeless characteristics of the categories selected.

In a study by Gusti W. Frankel, the content analysis technique is used in an innovative way to describe and interpret the values and attitudes of a body of sermons, behavior guides and children's stories that were part of colonial New England's child-directed religious literature. The author contends that certain psychological/historical studies fail to account for cultural differences, including some that are highly functional in a particular time and society. This study exhibits one of the most vulnerable characteristics of the content analysis technique, which will be discussed with the next group of studies.

Dissertations in Group II

The techniques of content analysis characterizing the second group of studies of social history as reflected in historical books for children are

considered here. Examples of these include studies by Barr, Broderick, Colberg, Deane, and Seltzer.

Many studies of content are not content analysis in the strict definition of Bernard Berelson, whose writings on this technique are most often cited. He describes it as a research tool used for "the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication."⁷ In a paper published in *Library Trends*, Tekla Bekkedal suggested that content analysis offers a sound approach to research in children's books, and she named Helen Martin's paper, "Nationalism in Children's Literature," as the first intensive study of content done in this country.⁸

In her doctoral dissertation Martin examined the quality of children's books with respect to nationalist ideology. She analyzed the symbols of nationalism as they appear in twenty-four selected titles and related the frequency in appearance of these symbols to the work's popularity among children of seventeen national groups. Symbols peculiar to the country of an author's origin are termed "we" symbols; those not peculiar to an author's country are "they" symbols. These symbols were drawn from economic and social life, occupations, national life, places and persons, natural history, and the supernatural. Martin identified an interesting area overlooked by researchers: the readiness with which various national linguistic symbols can be translated into other languages. Because the analysis was a frequency count and the population based upon statistical distribution, the findings for a given book at a specified time could be presented (in those terms) with a high degree of confidence. Researchers in the humanities have often overlooked the possibilities of a well-designed quantitative content analysis.

The number of studies that represent rigorous content analysis is not great. More studies employ qualitative rather than quantitative analysis to identify and characterize trends in communications content. Qualitative analysis is a useful technique in literary criticism and social history, permitting in-depth treatment of content. However, as it is often used to examine complex themes, there are dangers, especially in historical research, of tendencies to overstate and overgeneralize without adequate documentation.

One of an increasing number of studies of the black experience in this country, and the most thorough and extensive to date, is Dorothy Broderick's dissertation, "The Image of the Black in Popular and Recreational American Juvenile Fiction, 1827-1967" (1971). Most research in this area of children's literature deals with contemporary books. Of the

Scholarly Research

ninety-one relevant documents in the ERIC files, eleven dealt with the black experience; three of these were doctoral studies, and four more were available in reports of studies in journal articles, but only one dealt with historical books. Broderick examined a broad range of books and provided important insights about historical books. Her method combined bibliographical description and historical and literary critical analysis. Broderick's control of her selected sample of books was in terms of an implied adult approval, and her sources were those accepted as authoritative by the library profession on the assumption that these books would be accessible to children.

Scholars investigating historical research should recognize that although some aspects of longitudinal studies dealing with social issues (such as Broderick's) may become dated in reference to contemporary events and books, the analysis of historical documents reported objectively and systematically will remain relevant when viewed in context. The accessibility of this study has been aided by its publication as a trade book, *Image of the Black in Children's Fiction* (Bowker, 1973).

An interesting example of content analysis used with historical as well as contemporary books is Mildred Seltzer's "Changing Concept of and Attitude toward the Old as Found in Children's Literature, 1870-1960." Focusing on theories of predicted change, the investigator used a frequency count, modified content analysis, and a semantic differential analysis to test two hypotheses: (1) during four 30-year intervals following the Civil War (1870, 1900, 1930, 1960), there would be an increased variability in the description and symbolism of significant *old* and *young* characters; and (2) stereotypes and attitudes concerning the old would be decreasingly positive in contrast to attitudes and stereotypes concerning the young. For each thirtieth year, ten books were randomly selected. The prediction of increased variability during the time periods in the portrayal of old age was partially supported, while that of changes in attitudes and stereotypes concerning the old were inconsistently patterned.

The interest of this study to other researchers is in the techniques used. A considerable source of weakness lies in the selection of sample books; this vulnerability is recognized in the investigator's summary. Titles on the list for 1900 will suggest some of the problems: *Wizard of Oz* (Baum), *Little Smoke* (Stoddard), *King Arthur and His Knights* (Clarke), *Boy; A Sketch* (M. Corelli), *Granny's Wonderful Chair* (Browne), *As You Like It* (Shakespeare), *Three Jovial Huntsmen* (Caldecott), *Biography of a Grizzly* (Seton), *Chinese Mother Goose* (Head-

land), and *For Tommy* (L. Richards). It should be possible to identify a more useful and relevant universe of published titles from which a random sample could be drawn that would still be statistically accurate.

Dissertations in Group III

In the next group, studies of juvenile periodicals, there are almost as many papers as in the first two groups, which represent a much wider range of topics. Eight of these dissertations deal with nineteenth-century periodicals and the people associated with them. The appeal of this subject is not surprising; it represents a body of literature which is comparatively simple to define, and the surviving evidence is relatively accessible and usually interesting to pursue. Dissertations in this area are notable partly because in the past there has been a lack of respect for periodical literature at any level, and a corresponding scarcity of scholarly studies on the subject.

Some of the studies in this area will be mentioned here briefly. Readers seeking information on periodicals for children are referred to the fall 1977 issue of *Phaedrus* (vol. V, no. 2), which is devoted to discussions of U.S. and foreign periodicals and is prefaced by a thorough survey and evaluation of the literature on periodicals by R. Gordon Kelly. Kelly cites journal articles and master's theses as well as histories and dissertations, and gives some useful critical evaluations. Kelly's own work, "Mother Was A Lady: Strategy and Order in Selected American Children's Periodicals, 1865-1890," is an excellent study using the social history approach to a content analysis of the fiction in five of the best-known magazines of the period. He analyzes values, attitudes and behavior of a defined "gentry class" and their concern for the transmission of those values. This study is available as a trade publication from Greenwood Press (Series of Contributions in American Studies, no. 12, 1974).

A study made a few years earlier than the 1950 base for citation in this review is Betty Lyon's "A History of Children's Secular Magazines Published in the United States from 1789 to 1899." Kelly refers to this work as containing the most comprehensive bibliography of nineteenth-century juvenile periodicals currently available. It is a useful treatment of the influence of these periodicals on the development of children's literature and education.

Edwin C. Strohecker's historical survey of juvenile periodical publishing in the early nineteenth century describes literary magazines with the goal of providing a compilation of U.S. periodical publication from the first issue of *The Children's Magazine* (Jan. 1789), through the com-

Scholarly Research

plete run of *The Juvenile Miscellany*, begun in September 1826. He analyzes the publications partially from internal evidence, for purpose, editorial policy and content.

Jill Sweiger studied five midcentury periodicals from the social scientist's point of view. "Conceptions of Children in American Juvenile Periodicals: 1830-1870" explores the changes in the concept of the child as reflected by authors contributing to *Merry's Museum*, *The Juvenile Miscellany*, *Parley's Magazine*, *Child's Friend and Family Magazine*, and *Youth's Companion*.

Two dissertations devoted to the study of the periodical *St. Nicholas* each made unique contributions to the already considerable volume of writing about this landmark children's magazine. Mary Jane Roggenbuck confined her study to the years Mary Mapes Dodge served as editor, providing an overview of the publication's literary aspects, editorial objectives and trends in content. Attention is paid to the quality of Dodge's editorial judgment as contributing to the success of *St. Nicholas* and to the high regard in which it was held. A well-designed qualitative content analysis of *St. Nicholas* in a slightly later time period is Fred Erisman's "There Was a Child Went Forth: A Study of *St. Nicholas* Magazine and Selected Children's Authors, 1890-1915." Authors selected were Frank Baum, Ralph Barbour and Kate Douglas Wiggin. Erisman's focus on the "progressive era" and the work of these writers documents the struggle between the "rural" values still characterizing *St. Nicholas* and the changing urban society at the turn of the century.

One other study should be mentioned with this group: Mary Hunt's "Trends in Illustrations for Children as Seen in Selected Juvenile Periodicals, 1875-1900." This was a survey of types, methods of reproduction and observable changes in three juvenile magazines: *Youth's Companion*, *Wide-Awake* and *St. Nicholas*, and is the only study of illustrations listed in any of the sources used in this review.

Two other studies of periodicals listed in the appendix but not examined are those by Louise Harris and Edward Richards, Jr. Kelly concluded his survey of research in this field with some guideposts for future studies:

The study of the children's periodical in America, it must be concluded, is a neglected area within the relatively neglected field of children's literature, and while there may be differences of opinion as to what is most worthy of study, few, I think would deny that a wealth of opportunities for study exists. In the opin-

ion of this writer, the most pressing need is for a comprehensive bibliography of children's periodicals, one that includes religious and special-interest magazines as well as the literary periodicals that have claimed so much attention to date. Once we know more about what magazines there were, we need to have a variety of questions answered. Who wrote for them and with what intent? Insofar as fragmentary data permits investigation, who read them? What was the geographical pattern of their distribution? Some good work has been done as to the content of the best-known children's periodicals, particularly fiction, but much remains to be done, especially in terms of analyzing content of all kinds in terms of categories that emerge from the material rather than by means of contemporary categories indiscriminately applied to it. . . . And we need to know more about why children's magazines appear to have declined so much in quality in this century, despite persistent efforts to recapture the lost glories of *St. Nicholas* in the 1880's.⁹

Dissertations in Group IV

One might expect to have found more than six studies dealing specifically with genres of literature for children. Three (Smith, Hofer and Stone) are concerned with folk literature and its characteristics; one (Cohen) with "high fantasy" and its key motifs; and one (Sparapani) with books written for boys. The last, "The American Boy-Book: 1865-1915," is an interesting study for which the author adopts Edwin H. Cady's definition of a "'distinctive' American genre," which dates from 1870 with *Story of a Bad Boy* and ends with *Seventeen* (1914-15). Henry Sparapani surveyed seventeen "boy books" chronologically with the thesis that these books all followed directions established by Aldrich of a fiction of revolt against the priggish, didactic stories of the earlier nineteenth century.

In a quite different vein is Marie Hofer's "A Study of the Favorite Childhood Fairy Tales of an Adult Psychiatric Population." Hofer uses Jungian analysis to evaluate the conscious choices of hero-models from classic fairy tales and the patients' personalized versions. The hypothesis that the favorite childhood fairy tale is useful in establishing the psychodynamics of a psychiatric population was demonstrated and certain aspects point to a degree of diagnostic value.

Similar studies were noted in the manual search of *Psychiatric Abstracts Index*. In the 1971 *Index*, under "children-literature," two studies were cited on the influence of comic books with aggressive content, and

Scholarly Research

one on the relationship of fantasy behavior and oral reading of fiction to book selection. In the 1970 *Index*, a study on the use of fairy tales and toys in teaching child development to medical students was noted. Interesting questions about children's books and reading are being asked by psychologists and psychiatrists today. A manual search of the 1976 and 1977 *Index* volumes, using the heading "literature," showed an increase in the number of citations relevant to children's literature, particularly reports on the effects of reading, viewing and listening. None dealt with the history of children's books, although more revealing keywords may have been neglected in this search.

Dissertations in Group V

Studies of literary analysis and criticism as related to historical books are represented by three dissertations. One of these, on evaluation and critical reviewing of historical children's books, is a landmark study: Richard Darling's "Reviewing of Children's Books in American Periodicals, 1865-1881." Darling examined thirty-six periodicals — literary, educational, religious, book trade and children's — published during the post-Civil War period to 1881 in order to study every review of a children's book they contained. Comparative studies were made of all reviews of six titles. Darling found that the regular reviewing of books for children in national literary magazines was not a new phenomenon when Anne Carroll Moore began her book review column in *The Bookman* at the close of the 1920s, but was rather a renewal and extension of a considerable body of writing in the years following the Civil War. Darling's study was issued in 1968 in trade book format by Bowker under the title *The Rise of Children's Book Reviewing in America, 1865-1881*.

Two other dissertations of interest but not falling within the definition of historical children's books established for this survey deal with English and American books which are primarily post-1920 publications. These studies represent the literary critic's approach to the artistry and rhetoric of fiction — an approach all too infrequently applied to fiction for children. While these papers are not necessarily the best treatments of their respective theses, they are of note in design and critical internal analysis. Richard Shohet's "Functions of Voice in Children's Literature" examines the reflection of the author's personality in some children's books, and notes the influence of nostalgia on authors of "pastoral" versions (as defined by such critics as John Lynen and Wayne Booth). Carolyn Kingston's thesis, "Exemplifications of the Tragic Mode in Selected Realistic Fiction for Eight-to-Twelve-Year-Old Children," explores the idea that

stories in the tragic mode can be categorized according to their relationship to basic childhood fears. She identified a plot pattern in which presentation of tragic moments was found to be episodic, cumulative and building to a resolution that seemed to provide a positive experience in the recognition and resolution of crises.

Dissertations in Group VI

In developing a representative list of studies to survey the state of historical research, only citations for studies of individual authors who wrote books *for* children were considered. A large group of studies was thereby eliminated, but not a large group of authors. Not included were such outstanding figures in American literature's history as Mark Twain, James Fenimore Cooper, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Stephen Crane, Joel Chandler Harris, and Washington Irving — all of whom have been favorite topics for doctoral studies for many years. (Mark Twain is evidently a favorite author; bibliographies in four *Phaedrus* issues cited sixteen dissertations and nine journal articles about him; eight dissertations and six articles about Cooper were found.) The appendix to this article includes citations for three doctoral studies about Louisa May Alcott by McCurry, Salwonchik and Shull.

One other author, Horatio Alger, Jr., is the object of two studies and a number of articles. R. Richard Wohl's "The 'Country Boy' Myth and its Place in American Urban Culture: The Nineteenth-Century Contribution," edited by Moses Rischin, was published in 1969 as a monograph in the third volume of *Perspectives in American History*. A scholar in urban history and popular culture, Wohl explored the use of this myth by Alger to bridge the gap between the rural tradition and the emerging urban culture.

In schools which still require master's theses of independent research, some interesting historical research has been done. Because some of these papers which have not been published and/or submitted to ERIC or other document files are not easily accessible, useful original material is languishing unseen in school files. Monson and Peltola listed a few of these in their bibliography. One in the neglected field of popular, mass-produced fiction is a comparative study of the early and revised editions of a selection of Nancy Drew stories. This study by Christine Thorndill was submitted to the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago in 1976 and is titled "A Critical Analysis of the Revision of Two Juvenile Fiction Series." On file in the same institution is a 1976 master's thesis by

Scholarly Research

Mindy Friedman Klein, "Isaiah Thomas's Contribution to Children's Literature in America."

Dissertations in Group VII

The two doctoral dissertations on publishing and printing are O'Bar's study of the publishing house of Bobbs-Merrill, and Carstens's "The Babcocks: Printers, Publishers, Booksellers," a study of three generations of a family's associations with children's literature in this country. The Babcock children's books are identified by Carstens and categorized for content, style, theme, level of difficulty, and changes in format. This is a historical/biographical study in which inventories, account books, sales records and business correspondence provide useful primary source material.

Dissertations in Group VIII

As noted earlier, the one study on illustrations is Hunt's "Trends in Illustrations for Children as Seen in Selected Juvenile Periodicals, 1875-1900." Picture books for children are generally not represented in the field this paper is concerned with, and the reason seems to be the absence until the 1920s of artists of stature in this field of American book production. This aspect of literary history is explained by authors MacCann and Richard in *The Child's First Books* as a lack of relationship between children's book illustration and art history in general in the late nineteenth century. It was not until World War I, when this country benefited so richly from an influx of talented European artists, that the situation changed.¹⁰ One article about W. W. Denslow by M. P. Hearn (*American Artist* 37:40-45, May 1973) was cited in *Art Index* and located by manual search. This article was expanded and published by the Lucile Clarke Memorial Children's Library at Central Michigan University as a biography titled *W.W. Denslow* by Douglas G. Greene and Michael P. Hearn.

SUMMARY REMARKS

The likelihood of identifying the perfect study was not great nor was it expected to be. Most rigorous studies call for retesting of findings, recognition of variables, and application of statistical measures. In the broad field of literature research, studies of effects on readers are most frequently faulted, but there are serious weaknesses in many historical studies as well. Such criticisms are less often an object of concern by the research audience because historical findings are not usually carried into action in terms

of behavior changes, evaluation standards, educational programs, etc. On the other hand, the results of historical studies of literature are especially vulnerable because there is little opportunity to experiment with the subject matter, some parts of the universe being studied are unavailable, and, especially, many relevant factors and conditions vary over time. These studies are also vulnerable to faulty interpretations by users examining the research seeking support of a predetermined viewpoint.

Only limited assumptions can be made about the relationship between surviving books of a period and the attitudes formed by the children who read them. Children's books inevitably represent the adult's structure of society and history. Institutions, organizations, societies, customs and observances today are *not* the same as they were years ago, nor are motivations, goals, values and models. The "centers of happiness" of one decade are not the same for another. For these reasons, research that develops a scheme of cause and effect from history to literature must be critically viewed. Even the term *influences* is suspect if it suggests cause.

Research in the area of children's literature has been characterized by the interests and designs of several academic disciplines under which courses in children's literature are studied. Most frequently, these are English, education and library science. The strengths of the programs vary widely, not only among disciplines but from one school to another; and the willingness of a departmental faculty to approve research in this field has in part reflected its strength in guiding the investigations and its commitment to encouraging and developing student interests in this area. If the majority of courses are taught at the undergraduate or master's degree level, or are part of a rigidly vocational curriculum lacking flexibility for interdisciplinary study in communications, sociology, language, history, anthropology or education, even full-time investment in programs and teaching staff is unlikely to stimulate or encourage research in children's literature at the doctoral level.

Future research will continue to be influenced by contemporary interests and concerns. Two directions likely to be pursued are: (1) studies of individual authors, critics and publishers; and (2) investigations into the sociological and cultural environment of children at different periods. Other areas still not well developed include: (1) studies of literary criticism and the reflection of adult literary movements in writing; (2) studies of media other than the trade book, including content analyses of textbooks; (3) studies of the survival patterns of children's books and the influence of various social factors; and (4) publishing by ethnic groups for

Scholarly Research

children. One or more institutions or associations could conceivably plan for more than one study on a topic, in an ongoing program devoted to one period, region, or school of writing; such activity might make possible the longitudinal studies absent in children's literature.

There is another level in the production of scholarly research to be noted. In most subject areas, the studies are the result of a long period of germination, observations, evidence gathering and testing, reflection, and formulation, implying a time investment not typical in programs for professional accreditation. This is not mentioned to slight the excellent work and long months of effort invested in doctoral research; rather, the point is that in all academic fields, much important research is conducted by independent investigators equipped with the essential curiosity and research skills, who have a desire to promote better understanding of the present through the past. Activity can even be initiated and carried through successfully by the working professional. In essence, the responsibility for contributing to the knowledge of this field does not end with the wearing of the cap and gown.

References

1. Monson, Dianne L., and Peltola, Bette J. *Research in Children's Literature: An Annotated Bibliography*. Newark, Del., International Reading Assn., 1976, p. 4.
2. Lukenbill, W. Bernard. "A Working Bibliography of American Doctoral Dissertations in Children's and Adolescents' Literature, 1930-1971" (*Occasional Papers* No. 103). Urbana, University of Illinois Graduate School of Library Science, 1972.
3. Welch, d'Alté A. *A Bibliography of American Children's Books Printed Prior to 1821*. Worcester, Mass., American Antiquarian Society and Barre Publishers, 1972, p. liii.
4. Two supplements to this publication provide coverage to 1974; see Humes-ton, E.J., Jr. "Theses and Dissertations Accepted by Graduate Library Schools: 1970 through Dec. 1971," *Library Quarterly* 43:53-64, Jan. 1973; and _____, "Theses and Dissertations Accepted by Graduate Library Schools: 1972 through Dec. 1973," *Library Quarterly* 44:322-33, Oct. 1974.
5. Lukenbill, op. cit., pp. 2-3.
6. Monson and Peltola, op. cit., p. 3.
7. Berelson, Bernard. *Content Analysis in Communication Research*. Glencoe, Ill., Free Press, 1952, p. 18.
8. Bekkedal, Tekla K. "Content Analysis of Children's Books," *Library Trends* 22:112-13, Oct. 1973. See also Martin, Helen. "Nationalism in Children's Literature." Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1934.
9. Kelly, R. Gordon. "Children's Periodicals in the United States," *Phaedrus* 4:10, Fall 1977.
10. MacCann, Donnarae, and Richard, Olga. *The Child's First Books*. New York, H.W. Wilson, 1973, p. 15.

APPENDIX

Dissertations Cited in the Article

- Barr, Janet. "The Immigrant in Children's Fictional Books Recommended for American Libraries, 1883-1939." Indiana Univ., 1976.
- Broderick, Dorothy M. "The Image of the Black in Popular and Recreational American Juvenile Fiction, 1827-1967." Columbia Univ., 1971. Published as *Image of the Black in Children's Fiction* (New York, Bowker, 1973).
- Carstens, Jane. "The Babcocks: Printers, Publishers, Booksellers." Columbia Univ., 1975.
- Cohen, John A. "An Examination of Four Key Motifs Found in High Fantasy for Children." Ohio State Univ., 1975.
- Colberg, Donald A. "Moral and Social Values in American Adventure Novels for Boys, 1865-1900." Univ. of Minnesota, 1973.
- Darling, Richard L. "Reviewing of Children's Books in American Periodicals, 1865-1881." Univ. of Michigan, 1960. Published as *The Rise of Children's Book Reviewing in America, 1865-1881* (New York, Bowker, 1968).
- Deane, Paul C. "Children's Fiction in America Since 1900: A Study of Books in History." Harvard Univ., 1966.
- Erisman, Fred R. "There was a Child Went Forth: A Study of *St. Nicholas* Magazine and Selected Children's Authors, 1890-1915." Univ. of Minnesota, 1966.
- Frankel, Gusti W. "Between Parent and Child in Colonial New England: An Analysis of the Religious Child-Oriented Literature and Selected Children's Works." Univ. of Minnesota, 1976.
- Harris, Louise. "None but the Best; Or the Story of Three Pioneers: *The Youth's Companion*, Daniel Sharp Ford and C.A. Stephens." Brown Univ., 1966.
- Hofer, Marie R. "A Study of the Favorite Childhood Fairy Tales of an Adult Psychiatric Population." California School of Professional Psychology, 1976.
- Hunt, Mary A. "Trends in Illustrations for Children as Seen in Selected Juvenile Periodicals, 1875-1900." Indiana Univ., 1973.
- Kelly, R. Gordon. "Mother Was a Lady: Strategy and Order in Selected American Children's Periodicals, 1865-1890." Univ. of Iowa, 1970. Published as *Mother Was a Lady: Self and Society in Selected American Children's Periodicals, 1865-1890* (Westport, Conn., Greenwood Press, 1974).
- Kennerly, Sarah L. "Confederate Juvenile Imprints: Children's Books and Periodicals Published in the Confederate States of America, 1861-1865." Univ. of Michigan, 1957.
- Kiefer, Monica M. "A History of the Changing Status of the American Child in the Colonial and Early National Periods as Revealed in Juvenile Literature." Univ. of Pennsylvania, 1943. Published as *American Children Through Their Books, 1700-1835* (Philadelphia, Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1948).
- Kingston, Carolyn Tietje. "Exemplifications of the Tragic Mode in Selected Realistic Fiction for Eight-to-Twelve-Year-Old Children." Columbia Univ., 1968.
- Klein, Mindy Friedman. "Isaiah Thomas's Contribution to Children's Literature in America." Master's thesis, Univ. of Chicago, 1976.
- Lee, Elaine Jones. "A Comparative Thematic Categorical Survey of Children's Publications in England and America from 1744 to 1850." Temple Univ., 1976.
- Lyon, Betty L. "A History of Children's Secular Magazines Published in the United States from 1789 to 1899." Johns Hopkins Univ., 1942.

Scholarly Research

- McCurry, Niki A. "Concepts of Childrearing and Schooling in the March Novels of Louisa May Alcott." Northwestern Univ., 1976.
- MacLeod, Anne Scott. "A Moral Tale: Children's Fiction and American Culture, 1820-1860." Univ. of Maryland, 1973. (Hamden, Conn., Shoe String Press, 1975.)
- Martin, Helen. "Nationalism in Children's Literature." Univ. of Chicago, 1934.
- O'Bar, Jack W. "A History of the Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1850-1940: With a Postlude through the Early 1960s." Indiana Univ., 1975.
- Richards, Edward, Jr. "John Sherburne Sleeper (1794-1848): A Biography, Critical Evaluation, and Checklist." New York Univ., 1975.
- Roggenbuck, Mary Jane. "St. Nicholas Magazine: A Study of the Impact and Historical Influence of the Editorship of Mary Mapes Dodge." Univ. of Michigan, 1976.
- Salwonchik, Marie. "The Educational Ideas of Louisa May Alcott." Loyola Univ., 1972.
- Seltzer, Mildred M. "Changing Concept of and Attitude toward the Old as Found in Children's Literature, 1870-1960." Miami Univ., 1969.
- Shaw, Jean Duncan. "An Historical Survey of Themes Recurrent in Selected Children's Books Published in America Since 1850." Temple Univ., 1966.
- Shohet, Richard M. "Functions of Voice in Children's Literature." Harvard Univ., 1971.
- Shull, Martha. "The Novels of Louisa May Alcott as Commentary on the American Family." Bowling Green State Univ., 1975.
- Sloane, William. "English and American Children's Books in the Seventeenth Century: An Annotated Checklist Together With the First Printed Catalogue of Children's Books." Columbia Univ., 1953. Published as *Children's Books in England and America in the Seventeenth Century: A History and Checklist, Together With "The Young Christian's Library," the First Printed Catalogue of Books for Children* (New York, King's Crown Press, 1955).
- Smith, Richard E. "A Study of the Correspondences Between the *Roman de Renard*, Jamaican Anansi Stories, and West African Animal Tales Collected in Culture-Area V." Ohio State Univ., 1971.
- Sparapani, Henry R. "The American Boy-Book: 1865-1915." Indiana Univ., 1971.
- Stone, Kay. "Romantic Heroines in Anglo-American Folk and Popular Literature." Indiana Univ., 1975.
- Stroecker, Edwin C. "American Juvenile Literary Periodicals, 1789-1826." Univ. of Michigan, 1969.
- Sweiger, Jill D. "Conceptions of Children in American Juvenile Periodicals: 1830-1870." Rutgers Univ., 1977.
- Thorndill, Christine. "A Critical Analysis of the Revision of Two Juvenile Fiction Series." Master's thesis, Univ. of Chicago, 1976.
- Wohl, R. Richard. "The 'Country Boy' Myth and its Place in American Urban Culture: The Nineteenth-Century Contribution," edited by Moses Rischin. In Donald Fleming and Bernard Bailyn, eds. *Perspectives in American History*. Cambridge, Mass., Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History, 1969, vol. 3, pp. 75-156.

This Page Intentionally Left Blank