

Collections to support research in children's literature at the University of British Columbia Library and the Vancouver Public Library

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Résumé: *Sheila Egoff et Terry Clark nous présentent les collections de livres pour la jeunesse de la bibliothèque municipale de Vancouver et de la bibliothèque de l'Université de la Colombie-Britannique.*

The collections of both early and modern children's books housed at the University of British Columbia Library and the Vancouver Public Library make Vancouver a significant research centre for children's literature. The most valuable of these are the early and now rare children's books that form part of the non-circulating reference collections of both institutions.

The University of British Columbia's Collections

At the University of British Columbia, some four thousand early children's books published from the eighteenth century through 1939 are housed in the Special Collections and University Archives Division of the Library. Here is the raw material for the study of American, British and Canadian children's books and comparisons among them. For example, the British component contains enough eighteenth-century material to show prevailing attitudes towards children and their education in both a practical and moral sense, including valuable editions of the works of Thomas Day, John Aiken, Mrs. Barbauld, Maria Edgeworth and others of the period. An early edition of the well-known *Goody Two-Shoes* is a notable example. Among the treasures of the early nineteenth century is the second edition of Mrs. Sherwoods' *The Fairchild family* (1818), an edition that includes the famous 'gibbet' passage deleted from later editions.

Chapbooks—the little cheap books—carried by the itinerant pedlars of the British Isles from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth century, are a rich part of the collection with examples from the late eighteenth century as well as from the early nineteenth century centres of chapbook publishing such as Banbury and Ottley. These little books, crudely illustrated with woodcuts, show the power of the folk- and fairy-tale tradition. There is little doubt that such stories as *The children in the woods*, *Cinderella* (sometimes spelled Cinderilla), *The death and burial of Cock Robin*, and a host of others, were kept alive for and by children in an age when religious and instructional precepts were their more usual fare. Priced at one penny, these were available to the poorer classes. An interesting aspect of chapbook publishing concerned what we call today "cut classics."

Publishers then as now had no compunction in cutting down such lengthy books as *Gulliver's travels*, *The pilgrim's progress*, and *Robinson Crusoe*. This latter chapbook version became so ubiquitous in its crude 24-page format that the term "Robinsonnades" was coined to describe them.

The majority of children's books in the University's holdings of American, British and Canadian publications are from the Victorian era. Only the last thirty years have seen greater numbers of new children's books and more radical developments in the children's book trade than in the mid-nineteenth century. Since most collections of early children's books concentrate on the Victorian age, the Library hopes to expand this aspect of its collections policy. Its present holdings include books by a wide range of Victorian authors from Catherine Sinclair's *Holiday house* to the fairy tales of Oscar Wilde, and many of the books by the author of *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, Frances Hodgson Burnett.

Its "Alice in Wonderland" collection is a highlight of the University's holdings for the study of Victorian children's literature and its later impact. The 450 items in that collection up to 1966 are listed in *Alice one hundred; A catalogue in celebration of the 100th anniversary of Alice's adventures in Wonderland* and others have been added since. Here are early British and American editions of *Alice*, *Alice* by various more recent publishers, *Alice* in translation, *Alice* parodied, *Alice* by 80 different illustrators (including notably Salvador Dalí), and perhaps most interestingly, *Alice* imitated (as if anyone could) in such works as Edward A. Parry's *Butterscotia* (1896) and G.E. Farrow's *The Wallypug of Why* (1896).

Early American children's books are widely represented. These include such treasures as several editions of *The New England primer* and the first American (1787) edition of *A little pretty pocket book* by the famous English publisher, John Newbery, a valuable example of cross-Atlantic publishing trends as well as of publishing piracy. The American component of the collection is rich in the books that, in their time, garnered a wide readership around the world. These include Margaret Sidney's (pseud) *The five little Peppers and how they grew* (1881), Gene Stratton Porter's *Freckles* (1904), Jean Webster's *Daddy Long-Legs* (1912), and Eleanor H. Porter's *Pollyanna* (1913). Sentimental as these books are, in keeping with the prevailing attitudes of the time towards the young, they have page-turning qualities that could well be emulated by more present-day writers for the young.

In American publishing, the first twenty years or so of the twentieth century saw the proliferation, if not the invention, of the American "series" book. The Library has considerable strength in this area. This is a time period and an aspect of American publishing and writing that is seldom if ever studied. It is worth noting how the publishers balanced the sexes. The series "The radio boys" is matched by "The radio girls"; the "Campfire boys" by the "Campfire girls"; the "Airplane boys" by the "Airplane girls." When the boys went off to win World War I almost singlehandedly, the girls were on the battlefield as nurses and just

as assiduous in catching spies as the boys. These books are also notable for their feeling of youthful exuberance and the interest of the young in any new technology: the car, the radio, the airplane, etc. They are especially valuable for their pictures of girls and young women at the time who, unlike those portrayed in the modern teen-age novel, are interested in more than the opposite sex.

Pictorial works form a significant part of the collection: it is possible to trace the whole development of children's book illustration. The crude anonymous woodcuts of the chapbooks, the accurate and animated woodcuts of Thomas Bewick, the charming but static school of illustration of the early Victorian period lead up to the Victorian greats, Randolph Caldecott, Walter Crane, and Kate Greenaway. These and the later Arthur Rackham and Edmund Dulac are all richly represented. Examples of other twentieth century illustrators such as Kay Nielson, Maxfield Parrish, Lucie Attwell, William Denslow and a host of others can be studied. Even modern popular cartoon art can be seen in the first appearance in print of Walt Disney's *Mickey Mouse* (1931).

The Victorians began the books of paper engineering that in modern times have developed into today's "pop-up books," of which the Library owns a significant number. Their antecedents which can be seen in the collection include books whose interest lies in their design and shape: contour books, panoramas, and books with moving parts.

The Library's specialization in Canadiana of all kinds includes a special concern with acquiring and preserving Canadian children's books, defined as those written by Canadians, with significant Canadian content, and/or bearing a Canadian imprint. Children's books by British Columbia authors and/or with a British Columbia setting, including all current publications, are assiduously collected and preserved. Most key books in the nearly two-hundred-year development of Canadian children's literature are available for study, including both the first British and first American editions of Catharine Parr Traill's *Canadian Crusoes* (1852 and 1853), considered the first Canadian novel for children. Writings by visitors to Canada such as Frederick Marryat (*The settlers in Canada*, 1844) and R.M. Ballantyne (*Snow flakes and sunbeams*, 1856) can be compared with those of native-born Canadians including James DeMille, J.M. Oxley, Nellie McClung, Charles G.D. Roberts, and L.M. Montgomery. Authors who wrote about Canada from their homes abroad, such as the English Bessie Marchant, are also an integral part of the collection. Marchant's books are of special value in the study of the place of girls and women in early Canadian society. The importance of the pre-1940 Canadiana collection has been recognized by the Library's publication in 1992 of a detailed catalogue of over 850 items: *Canadian children's books 1799-1939* (available from the University of British Columbia Press).

Although the Library does not own a complete run of any one early children's magazine, it does have representative examples of the prevailing types of these from Britain, Canada, and the United States in the nineteenth and early twentieth

centuries. There are substantial runs of *Peter Parley's magazine*, *Aunt Judy's magazine*, *St. Nicholas*, *Chatterbox*, *The boy's own paper* and *The girl's own paper*.

Textbooks have always bulked large among the products of the publishing industry for children's use. The Library owns a sizeable number of these: 3,467 to be exact, most dating from the nineteenth century and approximately 90 per cent of them Canadian. They include books for the study and teaching of arithmetic, geography, English and French literature, etc. Their titles range from the short and snappy (*Lessons of common things*, 1863) to the ponderous (*A catechism of geography; being an easy introduction to the knowledge of the world, and its inhabitants, the whole of which may be committed to memory at an early age*, 1843).

The non-circulating collections described above are augmented by a circulating collection of modern children's books numbering some 50,000 and housed in the Main Library and the Education Library. In addition, there is a large collection of reference and circulating books about children's literature including bibliographies, catalogues, and biographies.

All the Library's holdings are catalogued; basic bibliographic and holdings information is accessible via computer through the library's database "UBCLIB." In addition, special card indexes of the holdings of earlier, rare, and Canadian material are available in which publishers, printers, illustrators, and engravers can be searched. These indexes include data discovered over the years in reference sources and through personal contacts; they also include subject groupings on such topics as "Christmas," "black children," "moveable books," and various types of illustration techniques such as "copperplate," "lithograph," and "woodcut" which are not usually available in catalogues.

The University Library is also acquiring early children's books reproduced on microfiche, now including the first part of the famous English Opie Collection. The Crane Library for the Blind at the University supplies books on tape for students taking courses in children's literature. Some three hundred children's books or books related to such courses are already available. By special arrangement, these tapes may be lent to outside institutions.

The Vancouver Public Library's Collection

The Vancouver Public Library is also a resource centre for children's and young adult literature. Its early children's books number about 2,200, published from 1728 to 1940. Much of this collection is not catalogued and information on it is therefore not yet readily accessible. These early books, along with the children's Canadiana collection (some 1,200 published since 1826), will be housed in a new Special Collections Division when the new Library Square Building is occupied in 1995.

The Library's Youth circulating collection is a major resource with strong

emphasis on Canadian and multicultural materials. It contains over 44,000 catalogued books and about 1,000 videos, 1,100 audiocassettes and 700 cassette-book kits. Compact discs have recently been added. Other special collections include:

- 1) a Resource Collection of reference and circulating materials on children's literature, storytelling, illustration, writing, and library service to children with a growing collection now of some 2,000 volumes;
- 2) the Visually Impaired Collection of Braille (350) and Large Print (200) books, especially targeted for expansion in the new library building to include materials for and about Special Needs children for their parents and teachers as well; it will be renamed the Special Needs Collection;
- 3) the Awards Collection, including a copy of each book which has won a Canadian award and representative examples of those winning American and British awards.

The study of children's literature is as much an academic discipline as that of any other aspect of literature and its social context. *Goody Two-Shoes*, for example, first published in 1765, gives a brief but vivid picture of the plight of the tenant farmer of the period, while the toybooks of the middle of the nineteenth century (especially the soft-covered inexpensive books of Randolph Caldecott, Walter Crane and a host of lesser-known authors) show not only the advances in colour-printing techniques but also the changing emphases in juvenile leisure reading. There is no clearer way of establishing social patterns than by looking at what books society provides or does not provide for its children. They are equally worth examining in the history and development of education, publishing, printing, and illustration.

Both the University of British Columbia Library and the Vancouver Public Library continue to add to their collections in these areas, making Vancouver a Mecca in western Canada for students of and research workers in all fields which children's literature can enlighten.

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Eds. Note: in 1992, the University of British Columbia Library published this descriptive bibliography of the books in their collection. Its full title is *Canadian children's books 1799-1939 in the Special Collections and University Archives Division, the University of British Columbia Library: a bibliographical catalogue*. Compiled by Sheila A. Egoff, with the assistance of Margaret Bushe, Ronald Hagler and Joan Pert.