

## Toronto Public Library's Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books

—Leslie McGrath



The Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books is Toronto Public Library's research collection of historical children's literature, book-related art, archives, games, and ephemera. The Collection has grown exponentially since its founding in 1949, and its use has evolved. This paper will provide a brief description of our holdings, and may encourage researchers in the field of children's literature to explore the wealth of research possibilities that Osborne has to offer.

Early and modern children's books take on greater meaning when studied as part of an historical collection. Contexts, derivations, and tributes become apparent, the influence of changing print technology and book-trade practices can be seen, and future trends can be predicted. This special collection illustrates literary connections and historical developments that can be evinced to students from grade school onward.

Whether an historical analysis of the changing treatments of literary themes provokes indignation, admiration, or mirth, it always provides food for thought, and sometimes gives inspiration to new creative works.

Library history adds yet another dimension to the study of children's literature. Take a step back from the book and see it as part of a collection. How is it classed and catalogued? Is it a primary, lavishly catalogued, and prominently displayed item, or a poor, distant cousin from "auxiliary materials" and "display" shelves? As readers at Osborne can see, age, familiarity, and affection can bestow the respectability that contemporary critics and book selectors denied, while increased interest in popular materials among students of literature and book history mean that catalogue access is as necessary for items like "Classics Comics" as it is for eighteenth-century chapbooks.

## Background

This special collection of children's books began as an exemplary, reference-use-only model library collection run by Lillian H. Smith in the old Boys and Girls House of the Toronto Public Library (TPL). Opened in 1922, ten years after children's services were formally organized under Smith, this library branch had quickly become a training centre, a showpiece, and a drawing card for distinguished visitors from around the world. Among these, in 1934, was a book-collecting county librarian from Derbyshire, England. Impressed by the children's library services he saw offered in Toronto, and wanting to foster a closer connection between Canada and Britain, Edgar Osborne donated his 2,000-odd early-English children's books to Toronto Public Library in 1949, stipulating that these should be properly housed, the collection staffed, the books catalogued within a reasonable time, and that the collection should grow. Together with the illustrative collection of non-circulating modern books, this became the Osborne Collection, a research collection devoted to children's literature within the TPL.

Osborne's interests were not limited to classics. He rejoiced in the popular materials of the past, including the "Penny Dreadfuls" of the Victorian era that impelled other writers, like G.A. Henty, the popular author of boys' adventure fiction,



**An original illustration by J.L. Kipling for p.13,  
*Tales of the Punjab*, by Florence Annie Steel,  
London: Macmillan, 1894.**

to produce work of what they considered to be a higher literary and moral calibre. In contrast to Osborne's private library, the Toronto Public Library's children's collections of the 1920s and 1930s were built following Smith's slogan, "only the best is good enough for children" (*The Unreluctant Years* 14), and they contained only books considered to be of high literary quality. Accordingly, the staff stocked multiple copies of

books of their special choice rather than those from the range of “popular materials.” They proscribed “series” books—Pansy, Elsie, The Bobbsey Twins, Boy Scouts, Honeybunch, Motor Boys, Nancy Drew, The Hardy Boys, etc.—as lacking literary merit. The exclusion of some titles would raise eyebrows today. Smith disapproved of *The Secret Garden*, for its apparent teaching of faith healing. It was added to collections at Osborne not in 1952, when Smith retired, but in 1983, when she died (McGrath 123). For the same reasons, “bad” books were kept at Boys and Girls House, though not for public viewing; they were kept in the attic in what was called the “Horrible Examples Shelf,” on the theory that otherwise, TPL children’s librarians, not having seen them, would be unable to pronounce on their faults first-hand. These books were later identified as “Auxiliary Materials,” and many have since been reclassified and catalogued as part of the research collections.

When the pressures of storage and the value of the Osborne materials had grown unmanageable, a larger home was sought. After a temporary move to a building at 40 St. George Street (children’s feet had shaken the first old Boys and Girls House apart, causing the ceiling to fall down), the new, permanent location at 239 College Street opened in 1995, and allowed the Boys and Girls House library to be incorporated into a full-service library

branch. Named for Lillian H. Smith, this branch houses the Marguerite Bagshaw Collection of resource materials for children’s services, the Merrill Collection of Science Fiction, Speculation and Fantasy (Merril is the foremost library collection on this subject in the world), an electronic resource centre with free internet access, and large circulating collections of adults’ and children’s materials. For the Osborne Collection, it offered secure, closed stacks, better environmental control, and an opportunity to re-evaluate the mandate of a model library collection.

Book selection practices had changed over time. The increasing sophistication of Toronto children in terms of broadening cultural backgrounds and interests, and their wider options of leisure activities, coupled with growing participation by parents in choosing children’s reading and the beginnings of school libraries (freeing public library resources for greater concentration on recreational reading) resulted in a demand for a greater variety of children’s books in branches, and a need to meet community needs through local-interest collections. More librarians worked on collection development, and were encouraged to voice opinions on varying definitions of literary excellence. The practice of having a very few librarians directing all system-wide collection development gave

way to greater participation by a wider pool of trained staff. Smith's influence can still be felt, particularly through *The Unreluctant Years* (1953), her guide for assessing children's literature that is still required reading for many aspiring children's librarians, but her exemplary children's library, though preserved and now expanded, is no longer a model for modern children's circulating book collections. It is instead a retrospective collection that provides evidence of how library service has evolved over time, just as it illustrates the history of children's books and reading.

In its early years, the few TPL staff members working with the Osborne Collection, limited to providing service as requested, and not yet concerned with achieving high usage, concentrated on the labour-intensive business of creating a print catalogue and establishing a scholarly reputation. Outreach and programming were then limited to a largely adult, research audience. Like other departments within a large library system, Osborne was affected by political developments, including citizen-participation library planning reports, the unionization of the TPL, downsizing, and reorganizations. Though Osborne and other special collections may retain slightly different handling and other procedures, they are now more closely integrated within the Research and Reference Libraries Division of the

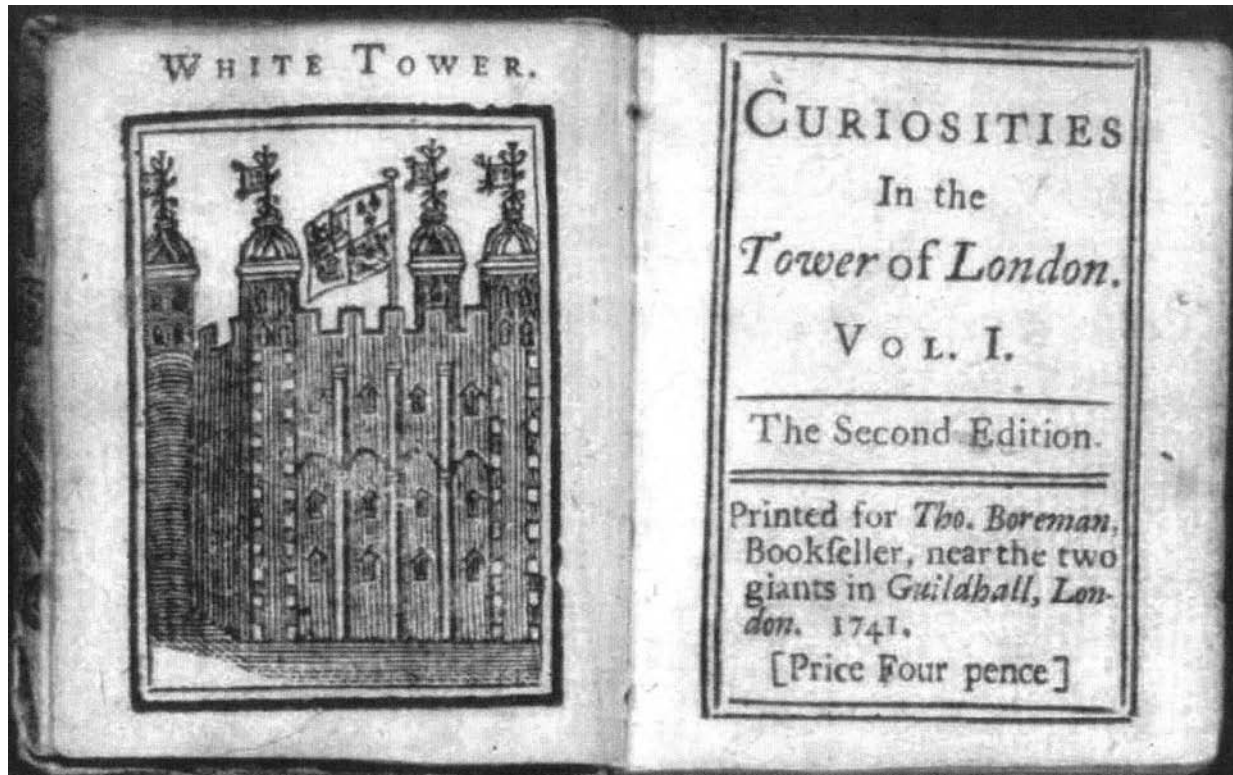
TPL, and follow divisional priorities in making service plans. For example, the identification of outreach to youth as a divisional priority last year led to a large exhibition of Osborne materials offsite at the Toronto Reference Library's TD Gallery. Co-operation between many departments resulted in a successful show for the target audience.

A major change came about with the amalgamation of Toronto with surrounding municipalities in 1997. This merger forged six regional library systems into one, creating the largest, busiest library system in North America. As part of this system, like the other special collections of Toronto Public Library, Osborne is now a showcase for some of the most beautiful and intriguing treasures in the TPL, and is given a larger presence in publicity, outreach, and cataloguing.

The main impact of amalgamation on the Osborne Collection is that each year, more people hear about Osborne and make use of its resources. There is still a cataloguing backlog, though this lessens each year. Having so much available encourages students to inquire about items not listed, allowing us to provide them with more leads and background information. (The process of cataloguing historical children's material for a public library, where contextual understanding of



**The Infant's Library (London: John Marshall, [1800]). A miniature wooden bookcase with a pasted decorative cover, holding sixteen books with stiff paper covers and decorative labels. Gift of Elizabeth Budd Bentley.**



*Curiosities of the Tower of London.* 2nd ed. Vol.1. London: Thomas Boreman, 1741.

the listing of problematic titles cannot be assumed, as it can be in a university library, is itself a fascinating topic, though outside the scope of this paper.)

The effect of a wider public receiving more news about a collection of historical children's materials is a large increase in the number of

young visitors, whether as part of classes or in family groups. Collection development now includes more book history materials and *realia* (physical objects other than printed or written materials, such as character dolls and puppets) to instruct and delight younger classes, and colourful, original book art to enhance exhibits.



***The Earth with its Inhabitants.*** The title is taken from the label pasted on the box; the publisher is unknown, but it is English, c. 1850? A miniature globe, 14 cm. in diameter, together with a miniature panoramic view on a continuous strip, 5.7 x 450 cm., folded to form 107 leaves. Each of the leaves, or sections, bears a hand-coloured engraving of an inhabitant of the world dressed in his national costume, or an exotic animal. The captions are in German and English.

The five activities of any museum, of which Osborne is a type, include collection, preservation, classification, exhibition, and interpretation of materials, and the last two are particularly important for children. We provide exhibits and talks to help engage visitors with the materials, and impose as user-friendly a reading-room policy as is consistent with proper care. With a separate gallery

area, researchers are not disturbed by visitors to exhibits, although we suggest a call ahead to make sure there is no talk scheduled in the reading room during a planned study visit.

### **Literature**

Descriptions of the contents and use of the Osborne Collection, by Judith St. John and Margaret

Maloney, both former heads of the Collection, have appeared previously in this journal. St. John wrote of Osborne's early Canadiana, describing the difficulty in defining such holdings, then dating from 1604. Arguments can be made, she notes, for calling the King James Version of the Bible Canadiana, as one of its foremost translators, Sir William Alexander, became the Earl of Stirling, Viscount Canada. She also remarks on patronizing descriptions more typical of pre-confederation literature, written abroad from second-hand travelogues, including an exchange from T.H.'s *A Short Way To Know The World: or The Rudiments of Geography: being a new familiar method of teaching youth the knowledge of the globe and the four quarters of the world*. Published in London by Tho. Osborne in 1712, this book purports to teach the basics of geography painlessly, through questions and answers. In the author's three-page description of Canada, we read:

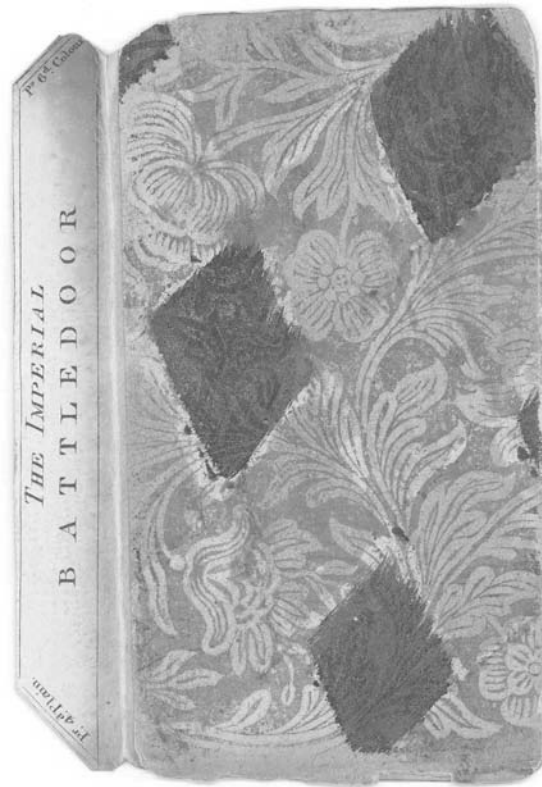
Q. What lakes?

A. But one of note, viz. Fresh-water sea.

Q. What mountains?

A. None of note. (214)

This account is "compiled from second-hand sources which [the editor] acknowledges in his preface." He expresses hope that the reader will be so just as to demand from him no more than



**The cover of *The Imperial Battledoor* [sic]. London: Newberry, c. 1795. The cover is stiffened with Dutch flowery paper.**





An interior view of *The Imperial Battledoor* [sic.] London: Newberry, ca. 1795.



Title page from an early chapbook, *The History of Valentine and Orson, Two Sons of the Emperor of Greece*. Newly Corrected and Amended. Dublin: Luke Dillon, 1734.

rough approximations (T.H. 8). St. John continues through colonial versions of British publications (such as Constance Haslewood's *Young England's Nursery Rhymes* [1887], which became, with a few editorial touches, *Young Canada's Nursery Rhymes*, [1888], earnest early-domestic publications, with their growing nationalistic note). She also describes special treasures, including a manuscript by Amelia Frances Howard-Gibbon, "An Illustrated Comic Alphabet" (1859).

Maloney offers a concise overview of the background, holdings, and use of the three main collections—Osborne, Lillian H. Smith, and Canadiana—that together comprise what is collectively known as the Osborne Collection. Total holdings then amounted to 15,000 items. No statistics are mentioned, though dates are carefully noted, and Maloney provides qualitative data about the varied types of readers, researchers, and subject interests, "encompassing scholars, educators, librarians, bibliophiles, casual tourists, people in business, the arts and media, and students of all levels from elementary through post doctoral. Academic fields of interest include the humanities, music, art and drama, and natural, applied and social sciences . . ." (16). Maloney's description of use applies equally today, but now can be analyzed in more detail.

### Osborne holdings to 1910

Our holdings are now in the range of 80,000 items, including books, literary archives, book-related toys, games, original book art, and ephemera. Approximately 40,000 items are listed in the online catalogue, including virtually all items up to the end of 1910, modern picture books, fairy tales, and fables (the remainder of the Lillian H. Smith and Canadiana materials, including non-fiction, will be catalogued within the next two years). The early materials include two cuneiform tablets over 3,000 years old, and a fourteenth-century manuscript of Aesop's fables. There are two juvenile incunables, a German edition of *Gesta Romanorum* (1489), and *Historia di Lionbruno*, a fairy tale printed in Venice in 1476; sixteenth-century primers; and religious works of the Puritan tradition, including a first edition of James Janeway's *A Token for Children* (1672).

Isaac Watts's *Divine and Moral Songs* (1715) is an important holding, remembered now both in its original hymnal form, admired for the singular tenderness of its sentiments, and equally well-known for the parodies by Lewis Carroll it inspired. Early chapbooks, preserving humorous stories, jingles, fairy tales, and legends, offer evidence of the popular taste for imaginative works. The Gigantick Histories series of Thomas Boreman, ten intriguing miniature volumes published

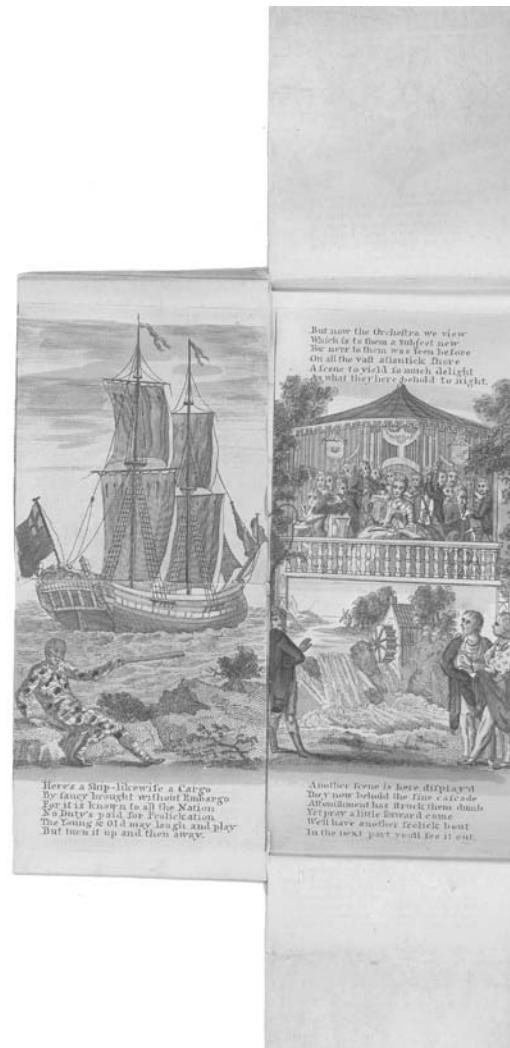
between 1740 and 1743 (nine of which are held by Osborne, though not entirely in first editions), with various bindings, some in the original Dutch flowery paper-covered boards, describe the oddities and edifices of London, and hint at amusement to come in future children's books. There are abridgements for juvenile readers, including the novels of Samuel Richardson, of which *Clarissa: or, the history of a young lady*, reduced to 176 pages ([c. 1780]), *The History of Pamela, or, virtue rewarded*, cut to 166 pages ([1769]), and Henry Fielding's *The History of Tom Jones: a foundling*, cut to 189 pages ([1769]), all unexpurgated, are notable examples.

Among the many other Newbery family publications held at Osborne, perhaps none recreates the atmosphere of the eighteenth century more effectively than *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes* (published in 1765; Osborne holds a 1767 edition). Like the Circle of the Sciences, a Newbery series (1745–8), which turns much of the trivium and quadrivium of polite education into a set of enjoyable, miniature self-instruction books, *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes* teaches that literacy, education, and a feeling of self-worth can help even a penniless orphan girl to succeed.

As John Locke's influence became widespread, particularly following the publication of *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693; of which



*Dr. Last, or, The Devil Upon Two Sticks.*  
London: Rob. Sayer, 1771.



*Harlequin Cherokee, or, The Indian Chiefs in London.*  
London: Rob. Sayer, 1772.

Osborne holds the expanded 4th edition of 1699), the instructional table games and amusing books he recommended for teaching children became more widely available—at least to the privileged. In addition to many didactic books of the period, Osborne holds a number of such elegant objects as ivory alphabets, table games, miniature libraries in wooden cases, a “grammar box of instruction,” and scrimshaw ivory paddles used as flashcards for teaching French. A touching number of instructional works contain cues for the female for teaching her children or charges. After a thinner education biased toward art, music, dancing, and French, and generally ending at an age when her brother’s began, many a well-born woman must have been grateful for the assistance.

Rounding out the instruction are “moral stories,” which abounded from the 1780s onward, such as *Sandford and Merton* (1783–9), and *Original Stories from Real Life* (published in 1788; Osborne holds the 1791 edition), only losing numerical dominance over more entertaining works after Catherine Sinclair’s *Holiday House* (1839) hinted that naughtiness need not lead to bedlam, jail, or an early grave. The more amusing books of the era, like *The Butterfly’s Ball* (1807); *Old Mother Hubbard* (1805); the S. and J. Fuller series of paper doll stories, including *The History of Little Fanny* (1810); and early lift-the-flap



[Ingraham, Prentiss, 1843-1904]. *Buccaneer Bess, the Lioness of the Sea*. Aldine O'er Land and Sea Library 182. London: Aldine Publishing, [189-].  
Pettingell Collection.

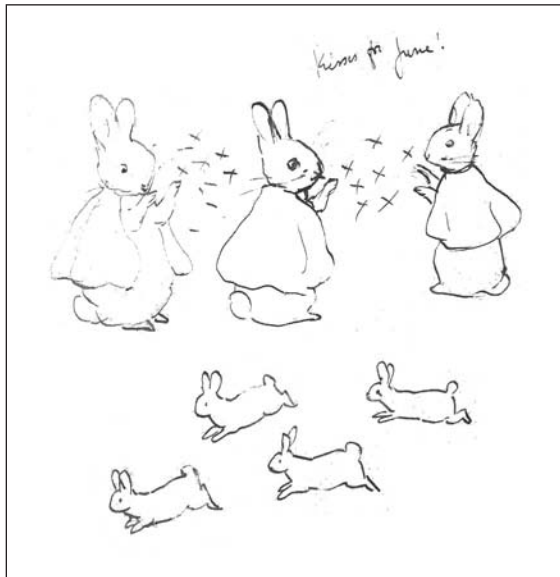
movables, notably Stacey Grimaldi's *The Toilet* (1821) and *A Suit of Armour for Youth* (1824), offer pleasant evidence that there is always a taste for fun.

Victorian classics begin with early attempts to produce attractive books, and to revive the folklore of England, as in Sir Henry Cole's Home Treasury series, which he edited under the name "Felix Summerly." Early works of fantasy are well represented, from Charles Kingsley's *The Water-Babies* (1863) to Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865; Osborne holds an 1866 edition and a proof copy, annotated by Carroll, of *The Nursery Alice* [1889]). Osborne holds a first edition of Edward Lear's *Book of Nonsense* (1846), with lithographic illustrations. Developments in colour-printing can be seen in toy books, the square-format picture books of the era, in which increasingly sophisticated publications competed for market shares through elegant illustrations by well-known artists. Cheaper ventures fought for the apprentice's and factory-worker's penny: Spring-heeled Jack, Dick Turpin, and even the rare female character like Buccaneer Bess appear in Osborne's Pettingell Collection of Penny Dreadfuls and Periodical Literature, recently added to the online catalogue.

Provenance can add special value and interest. Osborne holds Queen Mary's Collection of Royal

Children's Books, purchased with a grant from the Municipal Chapter of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire as a Centennial project in 1967. This collection consists of forty-seven books once owned by members of the British Royal family. It includes such items as Princess Victoria's geography text book, and a copy of Allingham's *In Fairy Land* (1870), a folio volume illustrated by Richard Doyle, beautifully engraved and printed by Edmund Evans, that must have been among Queen Victoria's prized possessions, for she signed it twice.

Louis Shore Nightingale, Florence Nightingale's nephew, gave his neighbour Edgar Osborne his aunt's childhood books. These were included in Osborne's gift to the TPL in 1949. In 1978, the children of the late John Sullivan Hayes donated his extensive collection of children's books to Osborne. Assembled during Hayes's forty-year connection with the Stratford Festival, this collection included Ellen Terry's copy of *The Water-Babies* and books signed by Arthur Ransome. An extensive collection of over 700 books, manuscripts, and letters by the famous literary Taylor family of Ongar was presented to the Osborne Collection in 1985 by Christina Duff Stewart, who wrote an extensive and scholarly bibliography of their work. The poems "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" by Jane Taylor and "My



Two of a collection of fifty-odd illustrated picture-letters written by Beatrix Potter to her friend Ivy Hunt, and to Ivy's young daughter June, between 1927 and 1943.

Mother," by Ann Taylor (Gilbert) are among the most familiar (and most frequently parodied) verses at Osborne.

The manuscript holdings at Osborne include the "The Story of the Three Bears, Metrically Related" by Eleanor Mure (1831). This is the first extant version of the celebrated nursery tale, in which an unnamed old woman intrudes into the bears' stately home. There are stories by Walter Crane, one by H.G. Wells, and a collection of fifty-odd illustrated picture-letters written by Beatrix Potter to her friend Ivy Hunt, and to Ivy's young daughter June, between 1927 and 1943. In the

early years of the correspondence, June was too young to read.

Among literary correspondence archives, there is a collection of letters sent by Rosemary Sutcliff to Christina Duff Stewart between 1958 and 1991, many ending with Sutcliff's distinctive and elaborate dolphin signature; and also beginning around 1958, a series of letters, messages, and watercolours sent over several years (not all are clearly dated) by the British Poet Laureate and author of children's books, John Masefield, to Judith St. John. Nearly half of this archival material, including literary letters, is now listed on the

Osborne website under “Archival Finding Guides,” including the literary papers of Susan Cooper and a substantial collection of the papers of Kevin Crossley-Holland, as well as the Canadian archives mentioned in the following section.

### Canadiana

In Canada, a few instructional works may have been published in the early years of settlement, like Robert Dodsley's *Select Fables of Aesop and Other Fabulists* (Montreal, 1810). Most books and chapbooks were imported, but our beginnings in home-grown children's literature may partly be dated from the arrival in 1832 of Catharine Parr Traill and Susanna Moodie in Peterborough, Ontario. The two sisters, née Strickland, continued the writing careers they had begun as girls, with contributions to periodicals—*The Snow Drop* and *The Maple Leaf*, among others—and with novels published in Britain. Canadian holdings at Osborne include Traill's manuscript, “The Swiss Herdboy



“And chuck her aloft on St Paul's church-yard steeple:”

“The Story of the Three Bears” by Eleanor Mure, 1831. The bears try to punish the intrusive woman, but

On the fire they throw her, but burn her they couldn't,  
In the water they put her but drown there she wouldn't;  
They seize her before all the wondering people  
And chuck her aloft on St. Paul's church-yard steeple:  
And if she's still there when you earnestly look,  
You will see her quite plainly—my dear little  
Horbook!

Horace Broke was four when his aunt made this birthday present for him, using her father's home as the setting for the story, and he pronounced his name “Horbook.”





**Laterna Magica, c.1900.** This brass and tin magic lantern, an early version of the slide projector, was used to provide a popular Victorian parlour entertainment. Coloured slides were passed before the lens of the lamp, for projection onto a wall or, most strikingly, onto smoke for a 3-d effect. This magic lantern is accompanied by nine hand-painted glass slides, c.1880, illustrating nursery rhymes, comic characters, and exotic scenes. Gift of Margaret Crawford Maloney.

and His Alpine Mouse,” and a family album of sketches, watercolour paintings, mounted prints, and notes. Our first English-language children’s novel, Traill’s *Canadian Crusoes* (1852), holds pride of place together with later editions, some with the

pedestrian title, *Lost in the Backwoods*, assigned by a misguided publisher.

Recent notable acquisitions include a manuscript presented to the Osborne Collection by the de Montizambert family, “The Sad Tale of

Mrs. Mole and Mrs. Mouse,” ([c. 1849]) by Jane Vaughan Cotton. Possibly the earliest children’s illustrated poem to be found in a public collection to date, and perhaps inspired by the traditional tale, “Titty Mouse and Tatty Mouse,” it tells of how poor Mrs. Mouse, overly busy with housework, falls into a pot of apple dumplings and boils to death; her sister, Mrs. Mole, on finding the corpse, cries her eyes out with grief—which is why moles are now blind, and live in secluded holes.

A glance at our Canadiana shelves shows the prevalence of adventure stories set in Canada and published abroad. Henty produced a Canadian title, *With Wolfe in Canada* (published in 1887, Osborne holds an undated edition c. 1920), while Marryat countered false advertisements of comforts to be found here in *Settlers in Canada* (1847). Ballantyne, Oxley, W.H.G. Kingston, and Egerton Ryerson Young produced exciting tales, though not in the range of editions we can display of our first children’s bestseller, Marshall Saunders’s *Beautiful Joe* (1894). Palmer Cox’s Brownie books provided comic relief to adventure and realistic animal stories. Cox was born in Quebec, and though most of his writing and illustrating was done while resident in the United States, he drew upon stories heard in his own childhood in creating the “brownies,” eventually retiring to Canada to live in his fancifully-decorated “Brownie Castle.” Literary

letters help to tell the story: W.H.G. Kingston, trying to get an assignment, offers to write to order; Palmer Cox justifies the ethnic profile of Brownies; Mrs. Traill, who knew how to write for publication, dictates a list of all her manuscripts.

There is an affecting letter from Lucy Maud Montgomery, telling a young fan, Gertrude Ramsay, that Anne Shirley is an entirely fictional character: “No, Anne was not a real girl. She, like all my other characters, was just a creation of my imagination . . . .” Montgomery apologizes for any disappointment that Anne isn’t real, and asks Gertrude to write to R.K.O. Studios to request that a film be made of *Rilla of Ingleside*, but, she begs, don’t tell them she was asked to do so . . . .” (Letter to Gertrude Ramsay).

*Anne of Green Gables* gets a single line in the first edition of TPL’s published children’s bibliography, *Books for Boys and Girls*: “The setting for this Canadian story is laid in Prince Edward Island” (155). This annotation is shortened in the second edition: “The setting for this Canadian story is Prince Edward Island” (270). By 1987, in *Favourite Books for Boys and Girls 1912–1987*, the TPL publication celebrating the 75th anniversary of children’s services, the book was given more expansive treatment and was accorded higher status: “Instead of the boy they planned to adopt, the orphanage sends Matthew and Marilla

Cuthbert impetuous, imaginative, talkative red-haired Anne Shirley. A classic Canadian story set in Prince Edward Island” (Vicente, Scott, and Osler 4). Osborne holds not only the first edition of *Anne of Green Gables* (and of most of Montgomery’s other works), but proof of Anne’s growth of stature through numerous later editions, translations, critical literature, and spinoffs.

There is a long stretch of Canadian children’s literary history between 1908 and 2007; Osborne holds the seminal works mentioned in retrospective bibliographies by Egoff, Waterston, and Saltman. To these may be added recent gifts of archival papers from Kenneth Oppel, Dorothy Joan Harris, Arthur Slade, Kathy Stinson, Rukhsana Khan, Barbara Greenwood, and the publisher’s archive for Greenwood Books up to its amalgamation with the House of Anansi. Original book art holdings at Osborne, now over 5,000 items, range from Ballantyne’s fine pencil sketches, C.W. Jefferys’s illustrations for *Uncle Jim’s Canadian Nursery Rhymes* (1908), and James Houston’s drawings for *Tikta’Liktak* (1965) and *The White Archer* (1967) to Marie-Louise Gay’s delicate watercolours for Don Gillmor’s *Yuck: A Love Story* (2000) and *The Fabulous Song* (1996). Canadian-born Margaret Bloy Graham donated the drawings for *Harry the Dirty Dog* (1956), including a paste-up of the book, and later gave

Osborne one of its signature images in the form of a painting of “Harry” lying on an “Osborne” cushion. A recent grant from the Elizabeth L. Gordon Art Challenge Programme of the Walter & Duncan Gordon Foundation enabled Osborne to purchase fine book art from across Canada. Illustrations by Murray Kimber, George Littlechild, Stéphane Poulin, Brian Deines, Erica Rutherford, Janie Jaehyun Park, and Geoff Butler were among the first acquisitions.

Donors continue to enrich Osborne with the gift of personal collections. Ross Murray’s Henty Collection is admirably complete, while Elizabeth Budd Bentley’s collection ranges from an elegant miniature library, *The Infant’s Library* (John Marshall, [1800]), housed in a wooden case, to a cheerful celebration of popular culture: Nancy Drew, Honeybunch, the Chalet School, and other recent favourites. We are frequently asked about tax receipts, though these are seldom the primary concern of donors, who wish to assure safe handling and public access to valued materials. The Toronto Public Library Foundation issues tax receipts to Canadian donors. Donors from the United States may give to the “American Foundation for Toronto Public Library” and will be eligible to apply for tax credits for their gifts-in-kind. Some large gifts may qualify as Canadian Cultural Property; these are handled differently.

### **Current Use**

The majority of visitors come as part of groups, educational groups in particular. Most reference requests come from researchers. We suggest that researchers send an e-mail before visiting, and forward records from the TPL catalogue of Osborne materials they would like to see, for quicker retrieval. Growth in use has been consistent, but the demands on staff time to date have been partially offset by the readier access provided by online catalogue records. A comparison of statistics shows that the number of items retrieved for researchers grew from 10,483 in 2000 to 16,079 in 2006, while the number of visitors rose from 5,161 to 7,409, and the number of inquiries from 5,695 to 7,962. There are currently 4 full-time and one part-time staff members, including three librarians, providing public service at Osborne.

For the statistics-minded, a tabulation of fairly complete records of recent class visits yields interesting data. A study of use over a 16-month period, January 2006 to May 2007, indicates that nearly half of the 74 classes were from junior schools (kindergarten to grade 8, 45.6 %), but the range included high school (8.4%), undergraduate (16.8%), and postgraduate (.04%) levels, and non-credit adult courses (4%). Slightly more than half of all groups came for a general introductory talk about book history, while the others requested

special subject talks on topics like the Middle Ages, fairy tales, and Canadian picture book art.

### **Researchers**

Use is extremely varied, and it would be interesting to see a qualitative study of topical interests. One measure of use is the number of publications either citing research done at Osborne, or using images from the Collection. There are many obvious examples of bibliographic and biographical works related to Osborne subject coverage. Consider, as well, Heather Jackson's *Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books*, Beverly Lemire's *The Business of Everyday Life*, Ann B. Shteir's *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science*, and Terry Murray's *Faces on Places, a Grotesque Tour of Toronto*. Marina Warner used Osborne for references for *From the Beast to the Blonde*, *No Go the Bogeyman*, and other learned works; Katie Trumpener cited Osborne materials in *Bardic Nationalism*, while Andrew O'Malley did research on parts of *The Making of the Modern Child* here. One academic and visitor, Lissa Paul, commented recently,

As a children's literature scholar, and an Associate General Editor of the first *Norton Anthology of Children's Literature*, it is difficult to convey the depth of my debt to

the Osborne Collection. For many years it has been a primary source for my inspiration as well as for my research. The holdings from the eighteenth century have been of particular use as I've gradually learned how to connect the maternal pedagogical practices of the period with twenty-first century exemplary teaching practices . . . sustained attention to the historical material has made me a much better scholar and a better teacher.

In a six-month period between December 2006 and May 2007, researchers were fairly evenly divided between their use of pre-1911 material (59%) and modern materials, published after 1910 (41%). This represents a fairly typical six-month period of use, including research on all the usual subject variations of historical children's literature (bibliographical, biographical, literary themes, and genres), as well as research on racist elements in illustrated children's books, and an illustrator's examination of early movable books and novelties, to see their construction. Research requests also included a very extensive search for bibliographic records only on "any" illustrated books about cats, and the use of archives of the papers of Kenneth Oppel, Susan Cooper, and Dorothy Joan Harris.

## **Outreach**

A volunteer group, The Friends of the Osborne and Lillian Collections, has promoted and supported the Osborne Collection for over forty years, and no description of the Collection would be complete without mentioning the many activities and initiatives the Friends have made possible. Formed in 1966, and now with over 500 members strong world-wide, this is the longest-established library Friends group in Canada. It helps the Collection through activities ranging from building acquisition trust funds and sponsoring scholarly lectures and publications to enhancing our conservation program. Other Friends outreach projects include appearances at book fairs, at which they sell attractive merchandise based on Osborne holdings and pass out printed information. The support given by this group, and by the British branch of the Friends, the Children's Books History Society (CBHS), is as practical and helpful as it is encouraging. The CBHS sponsored an occasional paper on the Osborne Collection in 1996, Osborne's 50th anniversary, and continues to provide outreach to scholars in the United Kingdom about Collection events and exhibitions. The Friends of the Osborne Collection publish Occasional Papers and sponsor colourful exhibit catalogues, listed on the Osborne Collection web page.

Researchers will be particularly interested to learn that the Friends's latest special gift to support book conservation is funding for an onsite face-up book scanner, so that we may eventually provide basic, unedited images from books to scholars and researchers near and far. (High quality reprographic services will continue to be provided offsite by the TPL's Preservation and Digitization Department.)

The Friends group sponsors a named lecture each year, the current series being the Albert Lahmer Memorial lectures. Individual members of the Friends have also endowed annual lecture programs for Osborne. The first endowment was for the Helen E. Stubbs Annual Memorial Lecture in 1987. The Stubbs Lecture, published annually, is given by persons "of outstanding ability and creativity in the field of children's literature." Lecturers to date have included many well-known authors and publishers, among them: Kevin Crossley-Holland, Ann Thwaite, Margaret McElderry, Susan Cooper, Tim Wynne-Jones, Brian Doyle, Christopher Paul Curtis, and Paul Yee. The upcoming Stubbs lecture will be delivered by the Inuit writer Michael Kusugak, who followed a tradition of oral storytelling until, encouraged by Robert Munsch, he began publishing his tales.

The Pantazzi Lecture Series, endowed by philanthropist and book collector Jane Dobell, will

be inaugurated in autumn, 2007, in memory of Sybille Pantazzi, former librarian of the Art Gallery of Ontario. The first lecture will be delivered by Dr. Andrew Biswell, and will celebrate the acquisition of a collection of the works of Edward Gorey by Osborne in 2006, the gift of Toronto collector George Grant.

We are frequently asked if facsimiles of Osborne materials are available, but the Holp Shuppan series of reproductions of notable early illustrated books (1979) is now out of print. As interest has now shifted largely to digital access, there have been few facsimiles produced based on Osborne holdings. Two Osborne manuscripts, "An Illustrated Comic Alphabet" and "The Celebrated History of the Three Bears," were published by OUP in the 1960s, and a new edition of Constance Haslewood's *Young Canada's Nursery Rhymes* was published by Key Porter (1999). These are now also out of print. Digitizing has moved slowly, but the Ontario Pioneer Bookshelf, to be accessible in the near future, will feature some Osborne material. New initiatives at the TPL offer the future possibility of publishing-on-demand.

Other Collection programs include exhibits. These are changed quarterly, and are intended to show highlights of Osborne holdings. There are also programs for children, to encourage "Young Friends" to visit Osborne. The 2007 March

Break Osborne event featured an ambitious craft, in which Barbara Reid, the plasticine artist and award-winning creator of picture books, encouraged over 100 young artists to create their own sculptures. All programs and lectures are promoted through the *Gryphon*, the semi-annual newsletter of the Friends; through the TPL's website ([www.torontopubliclibrary.ca](http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca)), on which the Osborne page (found under "unique collections") is updated frequently; and through TPL publications, including the quarterly events list, *What's On*.

### Conclusion

In the size and scope of the Collection, and

in its new online catalogue, Osborne has come a long way from its early days. The exponential growth of the TPL has allowed special collections such as the Osborne Collection to flourish as centres of scholarship and research, as well as to attract visitors of all ages with attractive, engaging displays and talks to raise interest in book history and reading. No short description can do justice to this collection as a subject resource. Instead, both drop-in visitors and researchers are invited to come and make use of Osborne, to discover the wealth of its holdings for themselves. Once you visit Osborne, if you are not already a Friend of the Collection, chances are that you will become one very soon.

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