INTRODUCTION

Housed in the University of Pittsburgh’s Archives and Special Collections library is the Nesbitt Collection. Margaret Hodges, founder of the Nesbitt Collection, created and curated a collection of “the literature of childhood” from 1976-1990.

This project tackles versioning, or the retelling of famous or well-known stories often for a specific audience. For the purposes of this project, the Nesbitt collection was browsed for multiple versions of the same story and selected based on the unique and interesting books available. This concept is especially fascinating within the realm of children’s literature, since Western culture often finds itself preoccupied with discussions of what is and is not appropriate for children. The way that we retell stories for them, then, can be quite a revealing measure of culture.

Rather than beginning with a more traditional mode of research such as content analysis, this project takes a different approach to analyzing the print object: descriptive bibliography. This project attempts to explore the physical characteristics of print objects to allow for a new perspective on its creation, intended audience, and cultural moment.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Descriptive bibliography: the aspect of bibliography concerned with the close physical study and description of books and other works

Online tools such as identfont.com and abebooks.com to identify typesetting and compare the present version with other versions available

Millimeter ruler and microscope for close physical study

TEXTS

Alice in Wonderland in words of one syllable

Descriptive tissue paper cover and color illustration plate from Arthur Rackham’s illustrated edition of Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens

Commonalities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poorer Quality</th>
<th>Better Quality</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fewer, larger gatherings</td>
<td>More, smaller gatherings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flimsy/quarter binding</td>
<td>Sturdy/full binding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smaller margins</td>
<td>Larger margins (esp. bottom and top)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black and white illustrations</td>
<td>Color illustration plates</td>
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Further Research

Descriptive bibliography reveals a whole new plane of print culture beyond a book’s content. When applied to versioning in children’s literature, it illuminates a perspective on culture not often discussed.

Although descriptive bibliography offers many unique insights into the print object, these findings would be best supplemented by a detailed content analysis or additional study of archival materials not available at the University.

SPECIAL THANKS

1. Faculty mentor Dr. Matthew Lavin; Clinical Assistant Professor of English and Director of the Digital Media Lab at the University of Pittsburgh
2. Jeanan Haas (Head of Preservation and Special Collections) Clare Withers (Curator of the Elizabeth Nesbitt Collection), and Bill Daw (Curator of the Curts Theatre Collection)