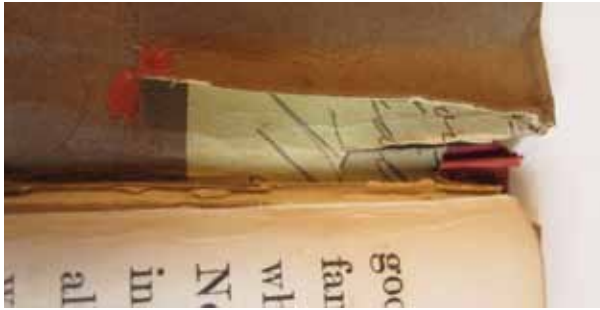


AN EXHIBITION

MAKING THE CASE FOR USED BOOKS



Among contemporary American collections, the Baldwin Library of Historical Children's Literature is peerless in its broad and unusual holdings. While it does include numerous first editions of notoriety and valuable manuscript holdings, the Baldwin is strongest as a collection of heavily used books.

While books in excellent condition provide useful information about how a book was initially meant to be presented, books that have been heavily used often offer clues about how society might have interacted with the book.

Scraps of paper found bound into the spines of nineteenth century children's books contain diverse visual and textual content, from advertisements for moth killing powder and haberdasheries to pieces of Shakespeare and Wordsworth; from handwritten sheet music to blurbs from medical textbooks to images of children themselves. Between the boards of the book, other signs of use, including marginalia, drawings, and bookplates, are there to be discovered; sometimes, even the way a book has been repaired can be worth further investigation.

This exhibit is a direct reaction to Cambridge University's 2003 exhibit, *Marginalia and Other Crimes*, a didactic display that villainized signs of use in library books. Former curator Rita Smith notes that, "Besides the cultural, religious, sociological, and historical-based research, the Baldwin Library is a rich repository for research on the book itself as a physical object." *Anomalies and Curiosities* aims to showcase the great cultural value of used children's books as a window into the way that books were made for and used by children in the nineteenth century.

1 AUGUST to
15 SEPTEMBER
2011

ANOMALIES and CURIOSITIES

of the
BALDWIN LIBRARY
of Historical Children's Literature



ABOUT

This exhibit was curated by Krissy Wilson, an undergraduate at the University of Florida who is majoring in English with a concentration in Children's Literature.

She was inspired to begin her research on somnotexts in the Baldwin after volunteering in the Conservation and Preservation Department, measuring Baldwin books that needed the extra protection of acid-free boxes in the spring of 2009. She has since had the privilege to help catalog rare children's books in the recently-donated Egolf Collection.

The exhibit contains a number of books from her personal collection, chosen in the style of Ruth Baldwin. They will be on display at the Alachua County Public Library Headquarters in January 2012.

THANKS

Rita Smith, Baldwin Library curator, 1989-2010
Dr. Terry Harpold, Associate Professor of English
Mil Willis, Rare Books and Special Collections Reading Room
Barbara Hood, Public Relations and Marketing
Richard Bennett, Head, Special and Area Studies Collections
Judith Russell, Dean of Libraries

UF UNIVERSITY of
FLORIDA
George A. Smathers Libraries
Special and Area Studies Collections

RUTH BALDWIN

Ruth Baldwin's fervor for antiquarian children's books was piqued by a gift of forty chapbooks given as a gift in 1952; from then on, her interest--indeed, obsession--never ceased. By 1977, she had amassed a collection of 35,000 children's books and brought it to the University of Florida (along with herself, as curator) after negotiations with other universities failed. By the late 1980s, as the result of haunting Gainesville-area garage sales and flea markets, road trips through the Midwest, and paging through just-delivered rare book catalogs, the Baldwin Library had swelled to 90,000 volumes.

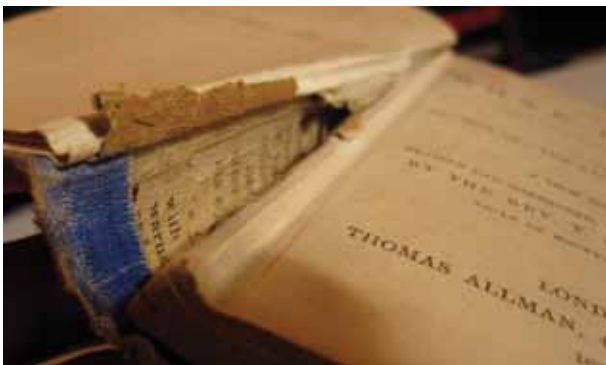
Curator between 1988 and 2010, Rita Smith, described Dr. Baldwin's collection scheme in her 1998 article "Caught Up in the Whirlwind" (*The Lion and the Unicorn* 22:3; 289-302): "She knew from the beginning that she was collecting to build a library for scholars and not collecting for investment purposes. She wanted books that children had actually read and handled." Smith continues, "Ruth Baldwin felt it was her responsibility to salvage these books... so ordinary that no one else collected them".



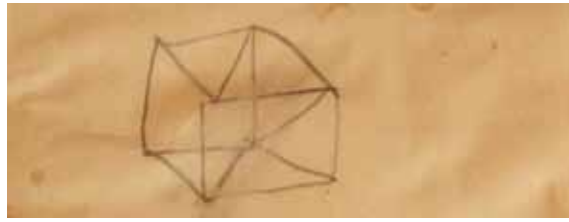
Today, the Baldwin contains over 100,000 volumes. It is a guiding resource for the Center for Children's Literature and Culture (clas.ufl.edu/cclc), and recently received a generous donation from Robert L. Egolf of 2800 children's books from between 1807 and 2003.

MALADIES

These books display a variety of physical afflictions, from being burnt by fire, stabbed with pins, splattered with ink, or, less dramatically, harmed by sun exposure, acidic paper content, and microfilming. What many collections would consider fatal flaws, the Baldwin values and protects, with the knowledge that nowhere else does or will.

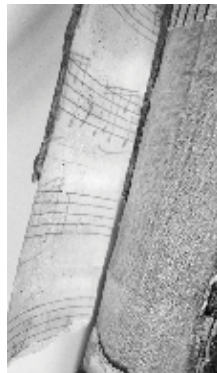


MARK of the HAND



Around the turn of the nineteenth century, technological innovation brought books to a greater audience; sacrificing physical quality for speed and quantity of production, literacy spread and books grew cheaper. Simultaneously, societal perceptions of childhood were changing with the advent of Romanticism... and the growing recognition that children were a market to whom books could be peddled. Books, and children's books in particular, began to be seen as disposable, indeed, ephemeral. As a result, books became less sacred and more penetrable, more tangible. Children began to interact with books in visible ways by writing and doodling in the margins and endpapers, rubbing coins and coloring pictures.

SOMNOTEXTS



The term "somnotext" was coined to replace "binder's waste", the terminology standard in research and conservation to describe recycled scraps of paper bound into other books. The idea that these texts are only sleeping, waiting to be woken and rediscovered, helps to value the myriad of artifacts that survive in the binding of books as much more than "waste".

Somnotexts typically exist between the crash and the case liner, and were used as padding to reinforce the spine. The fact that they are exposed by use

means that the Baldwin is rich with them; in other institutions, which have different ideas of book value, the proportion is significantly lower.

The somnotexts of the Baldwin are striking in their variety. Examples exist of handwritten sheet music, surgical texts, advertisements for moth killer, Shakespeare and artifacts of the bindery, like lists of orders and notes on the number of a book in a series. The happenstance relationships between the texts and the books in which they reside are often ironic, from racing forms and stock values in Christian books to books lined with cut-up strips of the Bible itself.

Please note that, due to the fragility of many of the somnotexts in the collection (as well as spatial constraints), only a small portion of documented somnotexts can be exhibited.

RECURSION

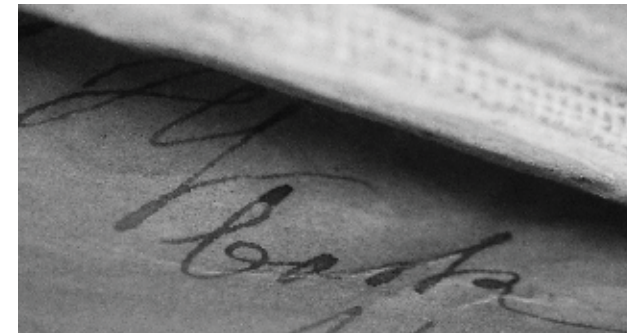
In a recursive way, many of the children's books in the Baldwin depict children in ways not intended by the writers, publishers, printers, and binders of the genre. Penciled into the margins or scrawled into any spare white space, children drew pictures of other children into their children's books. Sleeping in the spines



of children's books were images of children printed for other children's books and scraps of text describing the children featuring in other children's books. Indeed, some exposed

somnotexts contain the text of other books the Baldwin holds (sometimes, only a few shelves--or books--down the row). The degree to which they are interrelated is uncanny.

WHAT'S NEXT?



Many public and private institutions disdain used books, striving to build powerful collections based on copyright deposit and expensive acquisitions, with the mentality that first editions, celebrity association copies, and hand-press-era books are where the most value lies. The Baldwin holds books that not even the Library of Congress contains copies of, a fact that Dr. Baldwin took pride in. While it is true that the textual content of books that the Baldwin holds can sometimes be studied elsewhere, there are many books that cannot; the cultural content--somnotexts, the mark of the hand--nowhere else.

In most libraries, though, the Baldwin included, there is still no way to systemically search for signs of use, or even binder's waste. This exhibit strives to point out the frequency, diversity, and utility of para- and peritextual phenomena in the hope that it will garner more attention (and notoriety) in the future.