



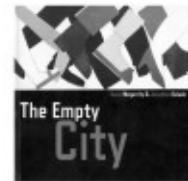
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The Child, the Scholar, and the Children's Literature Archive

Kenneth Kidd

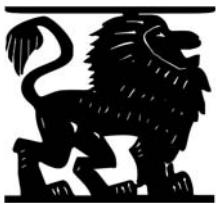
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The Child, the Scholar, and the Children's Literature Archive

Kenneth Kidd

Welcome to the Archive

I'm sitting in the second-floor reading room of what was formerly the main library at the University of Florida, an older building now called Library East, and home of Special and Area Studies Collections. It's a gorgeous room, with soaring walls, windows, and tapestries, recalling the interior of a church. There's no altar, and the room seems wider than your standard sanctuary, but it still has a nave-like feel, as if funneling energy forward and upward. There's an alcove on the left, behind the request desk, a processing office that leads to a maze of workspaces. Not so imposing as, say, the reading room of the New York Public Library, this space seems just right: large enough to suggest the size and stretch of knowledge, small enough to be comfortable.

The new main library, part of Library West, was recently remodeled, and boasts many amenities as well as a contemporary, open look. Computer terminals abound, and there's of course a Starbucks. Library East, in contrast, is the library of yesteryear. It opened in 1926 as the main library and was renamed Library East in 1967, with the advent of Library West next door. Later still, it became Smathers Library. Hushed tones are still the norm here. There are fewer students and computers, and no public circulation of coffee. Library East houses UF's Special and Area Studies Collections, including the Baldwin Library of Historical Children's Literature, which I am consulting today. The legacy of library science professor Ruth Baldwin, who came to UF in 1977, the Baldwin Library holds over 100,000 volumes published in Great Britain and the United States since the mid-1600s. In size and scope it is one of the most important collections in the world. It is, of course, non-circulating, and must be accessed in the reading room.

While the reading room is interior to the building, it is not the inner sanctum. Rather, it is what social psychologist Erving Goffman would describe as a “front stage” in the dramaturgy of the archive, the stacks being the “back stage.” The separation of archive from reading room is practical but also symbolic. As Louis Marin suggests by way of Disneyland, the creation of boundaries within a social space enacts a fantasy of threshold and transformation: *you are about to enter a magical place*, the logic runs (or in the dystopian version, *abandon all hope ye who enter here*). In the reading room, we are expected to abide by certain rules and codes. Food and other items are forbidden. Personal materials must be stowed away. Moreover, the reading room and the archive for which it stands are not available on demand. We must accommodate ourselves to its schedule. At the least, the archive offers remove from everyday experience.¹

Terms like spirit and soul generally make me uncomfortable. But the archive inspires enthusiasm and even a sense of wonder in me. The encounter with rarish texts in a special environment makes for something like a religious experience. Academia in general, and perhaps especially the humanities, functions more broadly like a secular ministry, dedicated to the gospel of knowledge and to cultures of the book. For me, at least, the archive’s spatial architecture—its “poetics of space,” to use Gaston Bachelard’s term²—intersects with and reinforces a book-love bordering on the spiritual and/or the fetishistic. I don’t believe in the canon, have never fretted the line between literature and everything else. I work in fields that might be called marginal, children’s literature and queer studies. Despite my general suspicion of literary elitism or exceptionalism, old books seem special and the archive all the more so.

The idea of the archive, I propose, operates not unlike the ideas of the classic and the canon, which, for all their problematic aspects, have helped shore up children’s literature as a creative and critical field. More so than the classic or the canon, however, the archive valorizes research, adds academic value to children’s materials. The children’s literature archive is at once a particular place—here, the Baldwin Library—and a broader institution/discourse for the preservation and elevation of children’s materials. Like the canon, the archive promises coherence and totality, reinforces the idea of a literary heritage. The archive is also a constellation of relations among its workers, donors, and users. For scholars, the archive is primarily a site for research. It enables professional development but can also impede and imperil such.

If the archive more generally stands for heritage, history, and/or knowledge, all the more so, perhaps, when it comes to the children’s literature archive. For better and for worse, the children’s literature archive seems to represent hope that adults can recover the texts of childhood experience, thereby preserving and understanding childhood itself. Reconstructing the

history or histories of childhood through children's materials seems deeply entangled with more personal retrieval or recovery projects.³ The personal dimension is quite evident in and around the children's literature archive, in the stories of its founders, sponsors and patrons, in displays and celebrations of cherished objects, in writing about children's book collecting. The archive of children's literature is widely perceived to be a most *special* sort of special collection, one forged from a special vision and exerting special appeal. This specialness is bound up with the archive's ratification of scholarly research (specialization) and institutional status: the prestige of the children's literature archive derives both from the general respect accorded research archives and the ostensible specialness of children's materials.

This essay profiles the children's literature archive as an institution and as a set of relations, affects, and fantasies. Throughout, but especially in the last section, I indulge in some autoethnography. While I hope to make some generalizable observations, my own archive work has been limited to the Baldwin and the Lena de Grummond Collection at the University of Southern Mississippi, two named university collections in the United States. There are of course many other archives in and out of the United States, as well as many other kinds of archives in which children's literature scholars work. No essay can do justice to the complexity and diversity of archival research. What follows is merely a report on the children's literature archive as I currently understand such, and an invitation to other scholars to tell their archive stories.

Old Forgotten Children's Books: From Private Collections to Institutional Research

Collections of children's literature vary greatly in size, scope, emphasis, origin, and general status. The 1995 edition of the American Library Association's *Special Collections in Children's Literature* includes 300 listings in the United States alone, plus 119 in other countries. Important distinctions can be made among these collections, and indeed among the terms *archive*, *collection*, *special collection*, and *library*, which I have been using interchangeably.⁴ In a technical sense, the Baldwin is a library, not an archive, since it does not include manuscripts, correspondence, or other paper materials traditionally thought of as archival. Other sites, such as the de Grummond Collection, do hold such materials as well as published books, and are more properly archives. Even so, I think of the Baldwin as an archive also because it is non-circulating and because its materials no longer circulate in the wider culture and in some cases are the only surviving copies. The Baldwin is a historical library with strong archival tendencies. In any case, some generalizations about the history and function of the children's literature archive are in order,

for while we have available some lovely profiles of particular collections,⁵ as yet there have been no comparative or cultural analysis.

The collecting of children's materials dates back further than we might imagine. Hans-Heino Ewers reports that in Germany, "early children's and educational literature, from the outset of book printing in the 15th century to the end of the 18th century, was being collected on a rather large scale by the libraries of the nobility, by monasteries, universities, and schools." While many of these collections were destroyed during the two world wars, some survived and have been incorporated into more modern collections. Ewers points out, however, that academic libraries stopped collecting such materials in the nineteenth century, and that interest in children's literature during that period (and well into the twentieth century) was non-institutional. Academic interest in children's literature resumed only in the mid to late twentieth century in Germany. Research suggests a similar pattern for England, Canada, and the United States.

That's not to say that earlier writing on children's books wasn't scholarly, only that it did not generally happen in the context of university culture. Ewers notes the emergence of a research tradition on children's literature that was "supported mostly by clerics, instructors, and librarians which were joined during the 20th-century by booksellers and collectors of children's books, as for example Karl Hobrecker (1846–1949) and Walter Benjamin (1892–1940)." Benjamin, now a widely known literary and cultural theorist, was also an avid collector of children's books, a writer for children, and an early scholar of children's literature and culture.⁶ He assembled an impressive library of German, French, and Dutch children's books from the nineteenth century (Doderer 170), from which he generated a number of essays, such as "Notes for a Study of the Beauty of Colored Illustrations in Children's Books" (1918–21), "Old Forgotten Children's Books" (1924), "A Glimpse Into the World of Children's Books" (1926), and "Children's Literature" (1929). In these essays, Benjamin reveals a deep knowledge about the history of children's literature. He also raises issues that continue to preoccupy scholars, anticipating Jacqueline Rose, for instance, in insisting that "children's literature" names what adults, not children, expect to see. "Children want adults to give them clear, comprehensible but not childlike books," he writes in "Old Forgotten Children's Books": "Least of all do they want what adults think of as childlike" (407).

In "Old Forgotten Children's Books," Benjamin also emphasizes the importance of children's book collecting by way of a review of Hobrecker's monograph *Alte vergessene Kinderbücher* (based on Hobrecker's own collection of children's titles). Anticipating the work of contemporary writers such as Nicholas Basbanes, Benjamin opens the review asking, "Have the

bibliophiles ever been invited to reflect on their own activities? How interesting the replies would be—the honest ones, at least! For only the uninitiated outsider could imagine that there is nothing worth hiding or glossing over here” (406). Book collectors are given to “[a]rogance, loneliness, bitterness,” he notes (406), but just as often to humility, sociability, and congeniality, as with Hobrecker. Benjamin then focuses on Hobrecker’s exemplary practices:

Twenty-five years ago, when Hobrecker started his collection, old children’s books were just so much waste paper. He was the first to provide them with a haven where, for the foreseeable future, they could feel safe from the paper mill . . . Even though he is the first archivist of children’s books, he does not step before the public with a sense of dignity and official rank. He does not solicit respect for his work, but only invites us to share the beauty that it has revealed to him. The scholarly apparatus, in particular a bibliographic appendix of some two hundred of the most important titles, is secondary. It will be welcome to the collector without distracting the nonscholar. (Benjamin, “Old Forgotten” 406–07)

Benjamin’s comments about Hobrecker’s approach and attitude suggest not a little ambivalence about specialized attention to childhood and children’s materials. While Benjamin lauded “old children’s books” and urged their preservation, he had his doubts about newer children’s books and the visions of childhood they embodied. In “Old Forgotten Children’s Books,” he praises such books against “the follies fashionable today, thanks to supposed insights into the child’s psyche—follies such as the depressingly distorted jolliness of rhyming stories and the pictures of grinning babies’ faces supplied by God-forsaken, child-loving illustrators” (407). For Benjamin, writing for children is fraught with peril, as adult desires interfere with the child’s natural instincts. “If there is any field in the whole world where specialization is bound to fail,” he claims in “Children’s Literature,” “it must be in creating things for children. And the beginning of the decline in children’s literature can be seen at the moment it fell into the hands of the specialists. I mean the decline of children’s *literature*, not of children’s *books*” (“Children’s Literature” 252). He’s talking here about child psychology and educational theory, not literary criticism of children’s literature; I’d like to think that Benjamin would have been heartened rather than dismayed by subsequent developments in children’s literature and its specialist criticism.

In any case, Benjamin’s own scholarship helped advance the cause of children’s book collecting, as an aid to research as well as a pleasurable activity. While he championed the joys of ownership, the fate of Benjamin’s own collection makes clear the general arc of children’s book collecting in the twentieth century. In the wake of his 1930 divorce, Benjamin lost access to his collection, which moved to France (with his son) and then to London. In 1985 the collection was purchased by the Institut für Jugendbuchforschung

at the University of Frankfurt, where it now awaits researchers. The collection has come full circle, first helping to model the benefits of a research collection of children's materials (albeit a small and private one) and now in turn benefitting from the success of that model. It helps, of course, that Benjamin is now considered one of the most important intellectuals of the twentieth century—so important that even his collection of children's books is worth preserving.

The development of special collections of children's materials preceded and helped make possible the rise of children's literature studies as an academic field. Most of today's significant collections were underway by the 1950s and expanded dramatically in the next decades, as universities placed more of a premium on research libraries and special collections, as well as on children's literature. In their entry on children's book collections for *The Cambridge Guide to Children's Books in English*, Margaret Evans and Juliet Partridge identify two basic kinds of children's literature archives: those originating with private collectors (librarians, antiquarian dealers), many of which are now part of university collections; and those originating as part of national libraries and which remain thus such. Both kinds of collections tend to have impressive range. The Baldwin is an example of the first kind of archive, as is Benjamin's smaller collection. As an example of the latter, Evans and Partridge identify the British Library as "still the single best collection in the United Kingdom, notwithstanding its unsystematic acquisition of children's books before 1950" (162). In the UK, the University of Oxford's Bodleian Library contains one of the most significant university collections, based on the 20,000-volume Iona and Peter Opie Collection acquired in 1988. There are other major collections in the UK, the largest being the Renier Collection of Historic and Contemporary Children's Books, formerly a private collection and now part of the V&A Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood. In Canada, the Osborne Collection, another large and important archive, was born when British librarian Edgar Osborne donated his personal library of 2,000 volumes to the Toronto Public Library.

Networking among archivists, curators, and other specialist librarians helped to convert the institutional capital of certain collections into professional capital for archive workers. Librarians were the first to recognize and mobilize around the significance of children's literature collections, with literary critics following suit. In 1964, the Children's Services Division of the American Library Association (ALA) appointed a Committee on the National Planning of Special Collections of Children's Books, whose purpose was first to identify existing collections, and then to coordinate communication and interaction among them and thereby raise their collective profile. The first step was a questionnaire sent to individuals and institutions in Canada and

the United States, focusing on the kind and volume of material collected and its potential significance. After reviewing responses to the questionnaire, the committee, chaired by Carolyn W. Field, decided to omit listings for collections that weren't research-significant, such as general browsing collections and collections with a teaching focus (also excluded were collections of Newbery-Caldecott Award books "unless autographed or including complete set of runners-up" [Field ii] as well as complete sets of *St. Nicholas*). The resulting list of 153 collections was published in 1969 as *Subject Collections in Children's Literature*. In 1982, a second and much more inclusive edition was released under the title *Special Collections in Children's Literature*, featuring 268 collections and including collections of various formats besides print (illustration, audiovisual media, foreign translations, etc.). 1995 saw a third edition, expanded to 300 listings in the United States alone plus 119 in other countries. While the number of collections has grown, the number of listings has grown dramatically, alongside knowledge about what is in those collections.

The "coordination" of children's literature archives amounts to something like canon-construction, as Anne Lundin, former Curator of the de Grummond, has suggested in her study *Constructing the Canon*. There are "significant" or canonical collections, such as the de Grummond or the Osborne or the Opie collections, and ostensibly lesser (if still highly regarded) collections that are smaller or more restricted, or just more insistently local. The ALA's efforts to value and network these collections helped make possible new research in children's literature and, gradually, new professional authority for children's literature scholars. The rise and sorting of the archive goes hand in hand with the articulation of a children's literature canon and field of research.

Most research collections began as personal ones, sometimes assembled in the name of research and sometimes not. However, the overall trend has been toward the research model, even when (rarely) a collection remains in private hands. From the start, the Opie Collection was a scholarly collection, put together from the mid-1940s to the early 1980s as a research archive; it formed the basis for the Opie's groundbreaking publications on children's folklore. The de Grummond, in contrast, started off as a pedagogical resource. Holder of an MLS and a doctorate in education, Lena de Grummond used the collected materials to teach children's literature and to inspire would-be authors. Only later was her collection refashioned as a research library, with more historical titles purchased to that end (not a few from the Baldwin, as it happens). Writes Lundin: "The activities of the de Grummond Collection have grown to represent those required by an archive (acquisition and organization), a reference collection (collection-building of secondary sources), a research collection (meeting the needs of visiting scholars), and a museum

(exhibits and programs)” (306). The Kerlan has a similar history. Irvin Kerlan was a medical doctor who began collecting rare children’s books as a relaxing hobby. He first acquired the books themselves and then became increasingly interested in what went into their composition. Like de Grummond later on, Kerlan solicited materials from authors—manuscripts, artwork, correspondence—and especially valued “the classics” (which included Newbery Medal winners). In 1949 he donated the collection to the University of Minnesota, and the Kerlan has since expanded and gravitated toward research.

The newest archive of children’s materials, the Seven Stories museum and archive in Newcastle upon Tyne, was envisioned from the start as a research collection and has been energetically organized as such. The archive emerged in the 1990s, out of what was then The Centre for the Children’s Book. The archive’s focus is British children’s books published from 1930 forward, as well as manuscripts related to such. A promotional brochure about Seven Stories features an introductory essay by distinguished children’s scholar Peter Hunt, as well as columns such as “Conservation,” “Using the Collection,” and “Exploring the Judith Kerr Archive.” Kimberly Reynolds, who teaches in the Children’s Literature Unit at Newcastle, calls the development of Seven Stories a “turning point in the study of children’s literature in Britain” (*Seven Stories* 17).

Moreover, the research value of children’s materials is largely asserted in historical terms. Whereas book prizes create modern, instant classics, in effect standing in for the test of time, books in the archive are valuable ostensibly because they are “historical” or have the potential to be so—they can tell us about history. The Reniers began collecting children’s books because they thought said books had historical value; they also collected all kinds of ephemeral material by the same logic (Smith 312). Even Seven Stories emphasizes its holdings as historically significant; books from the 1930s already claim historical value, the logic runs, and presumably so will books from 2010 in the not-so-distant future. The archive, as Derrida points out, is future-oriented as much as past-preoccupied. Also, the historical-cultural value of the archive is collective or cumulative; individual titles generally matter less than the overall collection. Individual titles are not necessarily canonical or literary; most are neither.⁷

Arguments for the historical value of children’s materials often intersect with the idea that we must preserve books that children loved because those books were influential in shaping individual (and perhaps cultural) development. These may or may not be “literary” or canonical. In her article “Preservation and Judgment,” Peggy Sullivan worries that “much of the history of childhood will be forever lost, not because the culture of children was undervalued, but because it was cherished” (17). Sullivan fears that books loved to death by

children have not been sufficiently preserved. Like Baldwin, Sullivan makes the case for preserving everything, and especially materials used and/or loved by children. The reader's love for books is more openly acknowledged when it comes to children's materials, and so too with archives of children's literature, which assert value in affective as well as historical terms.

Some collections do reflect greater investment in the literary and the canonical, as in the collecting not just of famous texts but also of papers belonging to famous writers. But those collections also usually have much material whose value is less clearly literary. The Baldwin, for instance, holds extensive runs of the Little Golden Books and the Big Little Golden Books. Baldwin herself was interested in materials that children used and abused, collecting less-than-literary texts and less-than-pristine editions. A professor of library science and the daughter of a respected Shakespeare scholar, Baldwin saw the collection as having research potential, but wasn't much invested in the idea of the literary as such, and assembled a motley collection of materials, including multiple editions of the same text. Baldwin was notorious for wanting and buying *everything*, at least everything published in English, and it is the very catholicity of her collection that now makes it so valuable. Cheapness, too, played a role in its current value; when Baldwin started collecting, children's books could be had for cheap, and in the beginning, Baldwin—operating on a modest academic salary—refused to pay more than 5 cents for a book. The Baldwin is now a gold mine for those interested in textual studies, as well as anyone researching popular and material culture.

"Special collections of children's literature," writes Lundin, "offer a symbolic role as totem. Wise beyond their years, these collections speak of how traditions deconstruct, canons re-form, and the old makes new" ("A Dukedom" 310). By preserving children's materials, and conferring upon them special (primarily historical but also affective) value, the archive asserts the research value of children's literature within the broader culture of academic and university research. By valorizing materials as research worthy, even materials like children's books and comic books (shocking!), the archive affirms not only scholars but the institution, functioning as a showcase for such and helping maintain the institution's status as research-intensive. Thus, the valorization of children's materials is bound up with the politics of university-level research and teaching. The Baldwin, for instance—acquired by UF in 1977 after Louisiana State University showed no interest in it—has over time garnered national and even international respect, thanks in no small part to its curator, Rita J. Smith. In 2008 it was recognized by the UF Alumni Association as "an historical campus site" and given its own marker, in a lovely dedication ceremony. (It was the second such site thus recognized, after the "site" of Gatorade's invention by Dr. Robert Cade.) By sponsoring

these markers and creating a walking tour of campus, the Alumni Association “hopes to highlight and publicize the research that is accomplished on campus and draw attention to the rich resources that are available to both students and alumni” (“Pop Up”). Especially at the graduate level, the recognition of children’s literature studies at UF is bound up with the status of UF as a research institution. And my own department’s connections with the Baldwin further both ends; we have a strong graduate program in children’s literature, and we host the Center for Children’s Literature and Culture. The Baldwin is an integral part of our program and the Center; all three support as well as draw prestige from the university’s broader reputation. Variations on such synchronicity (or leveraging) can be seen at USM and U-Minnesota. Basbanes points out that universities previously uninterested in children’s materials are lately accepting and even soliciting donations of such, as the academic and institutional stock of children’s literature rises (380). “Institutions,” writes Carolyn Clugston Michaels, “are really collections of collections” (70).

The Child, the Collector, and the Scholar

The story of the children’s literature archive as a cultural institution is thus easily told. A trickier topic is the archive’s relation to a developmental story about childhood, collecting, and scholarship, in which the child becomes a collector and then possibly a scholar. Both collectors and scholars can remain childlike in certain aspects, the logic seems to run, but collectors are ostensible closer to childhood, openly displaying their passion for accumulation. Scholars of children’s books, however, are perhaps more suspect than other scholars, despite the legitimating role of the archive.

In this developmental story or discourse, “collector” and “amateur” function like synonyms for “child.” The Kerlan, the de Grummond, and the Baldwin, among others, retain the charismatic trace of their founders, who were generally collectors and not scholars. One of the great ironies of archive culture, we are often told, is that collections such as these, now considered so important for research, result from a bibliophilic rather than a scholarly relation to books. Nicholas Basbanes devotes a chapter of *A Gentle Madness: Bibliophiles, Bibliomanes, and the Eternal Passion for Books* (1995), titled “Obsessed Amateurs,” to this claim, profiling Baldwin and several other founders of children’s literature collections. As it happens, Basbanes takes the phrase “obsessed amateurs” from Bernard McTigue, former chairperson of Special Collections at Florida. McTigue observed that “only an obsessed amateur” could assemble the sort of collections that now find their way regularly into research institutions. “Private collectors,” notes McTigue, “have always been the people who put the pieces together . . . It is

their passion that builds their collections” (cited in Basbanes, 357). McTigue points out that archivists and rare books librarians (not to mention scholars) don’t always see value in certain materials until later on. Put another way, private collectors often collect material of dubious academic capital—say, children’s literature—because (you guessed it) they *love* the stuff, which later accrues value in the university field. While Ruth Baldwin’s father assembled a respectable research collection of books that Shakespeare might have owned, his daughter’s massive collection of children’s books is far more significant, affirms Basbanes (see 371), thanks to shifts in cultural capital but also the extent of Ruth’s collecting mania. The “obsessed amateur” achieves a more substantial collection, imply McTigue and Basbanes, *because* she cannot grow up, in a sense, cannot move on to other challenges and tasks. In Basbanes and in other discussions of collecting, the collector is thus positioned against the scholar or more “serious” handler of books—even when, as with Baldwin, the collector is also a university professor.

Unlike the scholar, who is supposed to be rational and detached, the collector is allowed (*expected*) to be passionate, obsessive, and possessive when it comes to books. The collector can be more preoccupied with the activity of collecting, with the hunt and the chase. He or she can wax lyrical and poetic as well as professional. Consider briefly the definitive guide on the subject, Carolyn Clugston Michaels’ *Children’s Book Collecting* (1993). A children’s book librarian as well as collector, Michaels knows a great deal about the history of children’s literature and about the processes of illustration and book design. In fact, she urges her readers to bone up on the professional literature, take classes at local colleges, and study popular culture, in her words “a new academic discipline that relates closely to children’s book collecting” (45). What’s striking about Michaels’ approach, however, is her open love for her subject. Rather than an “obsessed amateur,” Michaels calls the children’s book collector “that special adult who is addicted to children’s books” (x), and claims such an adult is closer to childhood and thus has a clearer understanding of the “power of hope” (xi). Of her three components of book collecting, the first is “an emotional response to a material object” (31), to which later “we add the excitement of scholarship” (32). Collecting is akin to (indeed a version of) the general quest for fulfillment and completion. “Indeed,” Michaels writes, “collecting seems to be a kind of love story” (47).⁸ Collectors, in short, enable and sometimes also are scholars, but unlike scholars, collectors can declare passion and a sense of wonder, like the children whose books they chase. Scholarship, if it happens at all, is secondary to the joys of collecting. “Most collections are built upon a ‘first love,’” explains Michaels: “To repossess it, a collector must add adult thought processes to emotional impetus” (32). Even so, the collector, “that special kind of adult,”

is childlike in the passion for children's books, perhaps more so than actual children. The child in question is often the adult's inner child. Moreover, if the child-like collector is a special kind of adult, her collection will speak to "children" everywhere: "The de Grummond Collection," remarks Yvonne Arnold in a newsletter devoted to the Collection, "is a delightful smorgasbord that appeals to the child in everyone" (5). In other words, *some* adults can strategically call up their inner child, whereas others are forever childlike.

This contemporary discourse seems to have roots in a broader and more diffuse set of assumptions about the library's educational function. In American culture at least, libraries have long been associated with the project of child-rearing and citizen formation. The story of child into collector-scholar seems a more recent (and perhaps more select) variation on this broader developmental theme. In his "unquiet" history of library, Matthew Battles notes that by the nineteenth century, thanks to the proliferation of reading material, the "principal image of the librarian switched from custodian [of books] to caregiver [of patrons]" (120). The librarian's role was ostensibly to nurture library patrons, to supervise their development into literate, knowledgeable people. Not only were children eventually allowed into libraries after being excluded from such (that story has been told), but also patrons were increasingly figured as childlike, especially patrons of immigrant or underclass background. Librarians such as William Frederick Poole (who ran the Chicago Public Library) promoted a developmental program of reading loosely based on evolutionary science. In some respects, this developmental program was progressive, in that it sought to elevate the masses through literacy. Against elitist insistence that everyone should encounter only the best books, Poole held that readers should be allowed to indulge in whatever materials they like, so that they may evolve into more discriminating readers. Poole points out that "[t]he scholar, in his pride of intellect, forgets the progressive steps he took in his own mental development—the stories read to him in the nursery, the boy's book of adventure in which he reveled in delight, and the sentimental novel over which he shed tears in his youth" (cited in Battles, 147). "Here," comments Battles,

the ontogeny of elite readers—the growth and development of their literary habits—suggests to Poole a whole ontology of reading in its ideal form. The vast generic range of reading in the nineteenth century, which publishers and entrepreneurial authors had turned into a kind of literary great chain of being reflecting the levels and stations of society and gender, is transformed here into a developmental process undergone by the individual reader under the management of the librarian. As the scholar began with nursery tales and progressed through adventure stories, romances, biography, travel, and history, so will the new readers develop, and their society with them. And the correct parsing of each reader's place in this developmental scale is the special work of the

librarian, the role he plays in patrons' lives. Nurses raise infants; librarians raise library patrons. (Battles 148)

Poole was concerned with librarian in relation to the general reading public, not with the scholar in relation to the collector and in the context of academic or research culture. Still, the implication is that the scholar represents the apex of reading development, and that the child or amateur reader, if provided the right balance of guidance and freedom, might evolve into the scholar, or at least into a discriminating person of letters. If librarians raise patrons, perhaps specialist librarians (such as archivists and curators) raise scholars. The collector lingers somewhere in between, indulging in obsessive habits and suffering from arrested development, albeit happily—"that special adult who is addicted to children's books." Collecting can yield a mature collection, to be managed by certified professionals and transformed by scholars into academic knowledge.

The histories of some archive founders seem to confirm a pattern of life-long and passionate collecting. Even though she turned to book collecting later in life, Baldwin was an avid collector of assorted objects in childhood, paving the way for her later passion (Smith 290). A gift of children's books from her parents in her thirties reanimated and reoriented her collecting desires. A. S. W. Rosenbach, an important American bookseller and collector in Philadelphia, seems to have followed the "first love" thesis of Michaels, tracing back his interest in children's books to his acquisition, at age 11, of an illustrated *Reynard the Fox* (Bodmer 277). From this single volume sprang the Rosenbach Collection. Moreover, both Rosenbach and Baldwin insisted upon the developmental value of children's books in cultural as well as personal terms. "If the child is father to the man," notes Baldwin, "and if we believe that the readings of a child influence him in later life, then this library is a rich source of influences on what we as a society and as individuals have become. It allows us to trace our roots" (Baldwin 9).⁹ "Children's books have such a many-sided appeal that they are strangely satisfying to the collector," confirms Rosenbach: "Not only do they have as much scholarly and bibliographical interest as books in other fields, but more than any class of literature they reflect the minds of the generation that produced them. Hence no better guide to the history and development of any country can be found than its juvenile literature" (cited in Bodmer, 282–83). The "special" and historical value of children's materials turns on observable development, whether of individual or nation.

Some scholars have contested or revised this developmental story, not so much defending the child/collector/amateur as questioning the scholar's alleged maturity and detachment. Benjamin affirms the specialness of chil-

dren's book collecting even as he blurs the line between collecting and scholarship. Speaking of Hobrecker in "Old Forgotten Children's Books," he claims

only a person who has held onto a childlike delight in this field—children's book—would have chosen it as the subject of a collection. That childlike pleasure is the origin of his library, and every such collection must have something of the same spirit it is to thrive. A book, even a single page or a mere picture in an old-fashioned volume handed down from mother and grandmother, may suffice as the support around which the first tender shoots of this passion entwine. (406)

While Benjamin sounds much like Michaels here, he does not see collecting as a hobby or as childishly "special." In "Unpacking My Library" (1931), he celebrates collecting and makes a case for private rather than public ownership of books (including children's books).¹⁰ There he emphasizes the collector's "very mysterious relationship to ownership," including ownership of one's own memories or history. "Every passion borders on the chaotic," writes Benjamin, "but the collector's passion borders on the chaos of memories" ("Unpacking" 486). Moreover, the collector of books "does not emphasize their functional, utilitarian value—that is, their usefulness—but studies and loves them as the scene, the stage, of their fate" (487). He continues:

I am not exaggerating when I say that to a true collector the acquisition of an old book is its rebirth. This is the childlike element which, in a collector, mingles with the element of old age. . . . Among children, collecting is only one process of renewal. . . . To renew the old world—this is the collector's deepest desire when he is driven to acquire new things, and this is why a collector of older books is closer to the wellsprings of collecting than the acquirer of luxury editions. ("Unpacking" 487)

Benjamin refuses to separate collector from scholar. In fact, he casts scholarship as a *form* of book collecting, noting "Of all the ways of acquiring books, writing them oneself is regarded as the most praiseworthy method" ("Unpacking" 489). What is scholarship, after all, but the collecting and reassembly of the books and words of others? When Benjamin writes of Hobrecker, he also writes of himself: he too is a passionate collector of children's books, and he too retains "a childlike delight in this field." For Benjamin, childhood means not the time or stage before adulthood but an ongoing state of openness of wonder. Benjamin famously recast the writer-scholar as flaneur and rag picker, as scavenger and collector of words. His own compositional practices make clear the intimate connection between collecting and scholarship.

Other scholars argue for the intimacy of collecting and scholarship or against the privileging of the latter over the former. "Research," writes Celeste Olalquiaga, "is about searching repeatedly, systematically, obsessively, the proof being that once we have found what we were supposedly looking for, we start all over again. In this sense, research is akin to collecting" (33). "Once we have understood research is really about us, accepting that in its

pursuit we are no better than feverish collectors or impenitent seducers, the basic question is, what are we searching for?" (34). Moreover, researchers, like collectors, do not produce "original" material. "Instead, we work with and through what already exists," trading in "dead stock" or material that no longer circulates within mainstream commercial culture (Olalquiaga 39). "Driven by an obsessive zeal and an indefatigable determination," she suggests, "researchers and collectors deploy similar strategies: they compile and compose, each new element reconfiguring the whole in such a way that this process could be carried on indefinitely and it would still make sense" (43). Olalquiaga may overstate the resemblances to make her point that research is neither a special nor profound activity—or rather that research, like collecting, can be a kind of love story—passionate, yes, but also obsessive-compulsive.

In archive studies, Carolyn Steedman comes the closest to acknowledging how developmental metaphors about childhood and maturity circulate in and around archive discourse. In *Dust* (2002), she follows up on some of the insights offered in her earlier study *Strange Dislocations* (1995) about childhood and/as "the idea of human interiority." "Wanting the past," she writes in *Dust*, "can be attributed to certain turns of thought by which individual narratives of growth and development (particularly narratives of childhood) become components of what we understand a modern self to be" (75). This is a central lesson in *Strange Dislocations* as well: that childhood is a name for that search for origins, for the faith in selfhood and in history. At the same time, she emphasizes that the archive stands for resistance to change and growth, for a certain kind of timelessness, also associated with childhood. The archive "is not the fathomless and timeless place in which nothing goes away that is the unconscious" (68). Moreover, she points out, the fantasy of recovery that drives archives research has already been exposed by psychoanalysis as exactly such, a fantasy, one covering up the irretrievability of the past.

At the same time, Steedman doesn't give up entirely psychoanalytic approaches to the archive or the governing metaphor of child. She draws on an alternative tradition of psychoanalytic discourse—that of Bachelard and D. W. Winnicott—to theorize the archive as the exemplary space of dreams, recollection, and play. "The Archive," she writes, "is something that, through the cultural activity of History, can become Memory's potential space, one of the few realms of the modern imagination where a hard-won and carefully constructed place, can return to boundless, limitless space, and we might be released from the house arrest that Derrida suggests was its condition" (83). That is, the archive offers refusal alongside confirmation of linear time and fixed space. As in *Strange Dislocations*, with her discussion of developmental psychology alongside cell theory, Steedman underscores that developmental

narrative coexists with spatial, anti-developmental narrative (or at least anti-linear-developmental narrative). Steedman seems variously to encourage enchantment and disenchantment with the archive. She stops just short of calling the scholar childlike, but the implication is there, in her portrait of the scholar at work/play in the stacks, seeking release from house arrest, or dreaming of time past or future, or hoping for truth in knowledge.

Steedman's dream-play theory of the archive resonates with contemporary formulations of the adult reading subject as a set of materials and memories to be curated and examined. Memoirs of reading, very popular these days, typically present the self as an assemblage of texts, suggesting we are the sum of what we read. Such understanding is perhaps the legacy of developmental theory as gentled by the idea of boundless time and ongoing play. The child, that is, is understood as both the adult's past self *and* some aspect or dimension of his or her inner self. Since we're considering children's literature, Francis Spufford's memoir *The Child that Books Built* (2002) comes especially to mind. Spufford tries to decode his adult identity by revisiting the books that seemed most formative in childhood—all “favorites,” so this is a positive rather than a phobic theory of text-self formation. Spufford develops a history of himself that is at once developmental and non-linear; he, too, appeals to Bachelard as well as other theorists in trying to think through books and their influences. The organization of his book is at once chronological and spatial-thematic. The underlying idea is that the self is an archive of sorts, and that the adult is variously and simultaneously collector, curator, and even scholar of her own texts, especially those from childhood. This idea, which perhaps extends back to Poole and his colleagues, is also central to much cognitive and developmental psychology, especially that concerned with literacy and literature. The idea is implicit in academic archive studies as well. What kinds of scholars, we might ask, are built from children's books, and how do we tell their (our) stories?

In *On Longing* (1993), discussing the souvenir and the collection, Susan Stewart sees the democratization of literacy and literature as underwriting the contemporary notion of self-as-archive. “The passion for forming vast collections of books,” she writes,

has necessarily existed in all periods of human curiosity; but long it required regal munificence to found a national library. It is only since the art of multiplying the productions of the mind . . . that men of letters have been enabled to rival this imperial and patriotic honor. The royal predilection for giving libraries the names of their benefactors . . . has in more modern times been transferred to the identification of the reader with the books he or she possesses, to the notion of self as the sum of its reading. (Stewart 34)

In short, we are all named collections. Moreover, we all indulge in nostalgia, a vital part or form of identification. One of the Frequently Asked Questions

on the de Grummond website, notes Emily Murphy, is “How can I find a book I loved as a child?” suggesting that non-specialists come to the archive out of nostalgia (10). But this motivation is no less true of scholars, asserts Murphy, drawing on Stewart’s work. The archive more broadly becomes something of a souvenir for researchers, she suggests—or rather, stories of the archive and archive research work as such, “are a way of bringing back the material that we cannot take with us,” even as they “act as a replacement for this nostalgia for our childhood books, so that we trade one longing for another” (Murphy 14–15). Perhaps all archive work, not just work with children’s materials, functions this way, is motivated by a desire to return to childhood experience as much as by the desire to discover something new. In my own case, I suspect that archive storytelling does in fact trade one longing for another. This essay, in other words, is a souvenir, not only of my experiences with the Baldwin but also of my lifelong love for children’s books.

Archive Pedagogy

That the archive is not only or always an enchanting place is not lost on researchers, some of who have written about the fatigue and boredom of archive work, not to mention the physical discomfort (“take a sweater” is common wisdom). The archive is designed for the preservation of its materials, not for the convenience of its patrons or caretakers. Time in the archive can go too slow or (more usually) too fast. In *Dust*, Steedman takes issue with Derrida’s account of “archive fever,” emphasizing not only the archive’s “ordinariness, the unremarkable nature of archives, and the everyday disappointments that historians know they will find there” (9) but also the literal fevers inspired by the archive—among them the night fevers of sleeping (or trying to sleep) in “a cheap hotel” where hundreds of others have slept before you (“leaving their dust and debris in the fibres of the blankets”) (17) as well as the feverish dread that you will be insufficient to the task. Moreover, the archive’s literal dust can be hazardous; Steedman reviews the historical literature on “brain fever” and other “diseases of literary men” linked with the consumption of dust from papermaking materials such as rags and cotton (21). The codex has arguably been “a locus of a whole range of industrial diseases” (24), even a source of exposure to anthrax. “We are talking epidemiology here, not metaphor,” she writes: “Real Archive Fever, or Archive Fever Proper: a new entry for the medical dictionaries” (*Dust* 29).

While there are dangers to waxing lyrical about the archive, my own archive fever is more the stuff of romantic fantasy than realism. As an undergraduate, I spent one summer at Brasenose College, part of the University of Oxford. At the time, the Bodleian Library, located next to Brasenose, was in the process of acquiring the Opie Collection of Children’s Literature. Texts from

the collection were on display, including early titles by John Newbery. On the trip was a professor with whom I had taken several classes. Noting my fascination with the collection, he offered to put me in touch with a scholar of children's literature, and also said that he could get me a special visitor's pass to the Bodleian, should I be inclined to look around. I did not take him up on the offer, but I did go to graduate school.

Flash forward to 1998, when I was a faculty job candidate at Florida. I have often said that one of the things that drew me to the university was the Baldwin. I envisioned myself finally making good on my Bodleian fantasy, sitting in the reading room every week, calling up book after book and turning my discoveries into scholarship. Research does, after all, happen in the Baldwin, and with some frequency. So far, however, I've been to the Baldwin a few dozen times at most, most often for special events or in connection with my teaching, especially two graduate seminars devoted to archive studies and children's literature. I continue to feel deeply invested in the Baldwin. But I can't yet say that the Baldwin has been a regular part of my research life. I have the same relationship to archival work that I have to exercise; dreaming about it beats doing it. I suffer from archive guilt or shame, though not enough to deform my academic sense of self. While I like the Baldwin, it's the *idea* of the archive that I love, the fantasy of search and recovery, the romance of research and scholarly self-fashioning. Perhaps if I had the research credentials of someone like Steedman, I'd be less likely to idealize the archive, or better able to achieve a balanced view of it. My admission that the archive is not always or necessarily a place of enchantment is pretty perfunctory, meaning, I know this (rationally), but I still find the archive terribly seductive as an idea.

It's not surprising that I've achieved a more productive relationship to the archive through my teaching than through my research. Teaching, too, is about fantasy and the future, about imagining the possibilities. I developed the seminar "Into the Archive" so that my students and I could take advantage of the Baldwin, as well as think critically about the archive as an institution and idea. The course was designed as half-seminar, half-workshop, with some weeks given over to shared reading and alternating weeks devoted to reports on research in progress. Everyone got regular feedback and the atmosphere was very collaborative. Each time I've taught the course I've learned a great deal. My general sense is that more graduate seminars should be structured this way, or at the least should incorporate a workshop element. I would call my archive pedagogy a success, when measured not only by the quality of our individual and collective work but also by the publication of that work—quite a few students have published their research and/or discovered a dissertation topic.

“Into the Archive” was based on the assumption that archival experiences are good for the scholar, especially the scholar-in-training. Research in the archive builds scholarly character—right?—by teaching patience with the process of research, by providing an immersive, often humbling experience of print culture. Work in the archive, moreover, can complicate what we think we know about a field. At the same time, “failure” in the archive can make for successful scholarship, in that lack of material is itself an interesting story and/or can lead to a productive reframing of agenda. Archive research teaches you as much about yourself as about your research subject. And experience in the archive helps diversify one’s academic portfolio. Even if one chooses a non-archive topic for the dissertation, it never hurts to have a side archive research project going. So I kept insisting. But looking back, and in spite of the course’s clear success, I can’t help but worry that my pedagogy reproduced—or at the least, failed to challenge—the developmental narrative about the making of scholars implicit in much writing about archives and special collections. It’s a tricky issue, because graduate students *are* developing scholars, have enrolled in graduate school to learn new skills and grow intellectually as well to enter a profession. When does mentoring veer into paternalism? Is the developmental narrative of child-to-scholar hardwired into library and archive discourse, and if so, is there a way to acknowledge that legacy critically while going about the business of guidance?

These are ongoing questions. While I consider myself an open and flexible teacher, not particularly invested in my own authority, I do seem more comfortable presiding over the research projects of my students than in formulating new projects of my own alongside them. Teaching a graduate course on the archive, then, had at least a double function for me, offsetting my archive guilt and shame (look, I’m doing *something* with the Library!) while maintaining my status as teacher against the potentially destabilizing effects of archive (over)exposure. It didn’t matter that I’m not an expert on all the material being considered—no one could be, anyway—because I had *other* things to offer: supervision, writing advice, a sense of field.

Were I to teach the course again, I would foreground the developmental discourse in and around the archive and be more upfront about the anxieties behind my archive pedagogy. The subject of graduate student mentoring in relation to academic reproduction would definitely get more attention. And I would try to be less worried about archive schooling, about the possibility of my unlearning what I think I know, about the weight of the past and the openness of the future. “The archive: if we want to know what that will have meant, we will only know in times to come,” notes Derrida. “Perhaps. Not tomorrow but in times to come, later on or perhaps never” (36).

Kenneth Kidd is Associate Professor of English at the University of Florida, where he teaches children's literature and critical theory. He is author of Making American Boys (Minnesota UP 2004) and the forthcoming Freud in Oz: At the Intersections of Psychoanalysis and Children's Literature (also Minnesota UP). He is Associate Editor of the Children's Literature Association Quarterly.

Notes

This essay is my dedicated to the fabulous graduate students who undertook “Into the Archive” with me, especially Emily Murphy, whose insightful work is acknowledged in this essay. Heartfelt thanks goes also to Rita Smith, for her generosity and friendship. Rita worked under Ruth Baldwin before becoming curator, and has significantly improved the library’s holdings and visibility. I would also like to thank a new friend, Ellen Ruffin, for her gracious introduction to the de Grummond Collection.

¹ No doubt there’s much to say also about the work spaces beyond the reading room, especially the offices where materials are received, processed, and prepared for storage by archivists, preservationists, and other professional staff; the archive is of course also an office or a sequence of offices, with its own rules and arrangements. Maybe these spaces feel more pedestrian to library and archive workers. I’m speaking here about own experience, which may or may not be the experience of archivists, curators, preservationists, and other professional archive workers. For an instructive discussion of relations amongst donor, archivist, and scholar, see Murphy; as she underscores, there’s much to be learned there about the archive’s “life cycle” and about the politics of literary valuation and preservation more generally.

² In *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard forges an interpretive method he calls “topoanalysis” out of phenomenology, psychology, and poetic studies, in order to analyze how lived space (and in particular, “felicitous space”) represents and embodies the “poetic image” (xxvii): “Topoanalysis would be the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives” (8).

³ Such hope comingles with an effort in archive studies to “story” the archive, to foreground rather than repress formative experiences. Hence the editors of *Beyond the Archives: Research as a Lived Process* emphasize “the importance of tapping into our passions, pursuing subjects that attract our attention, and allowing creativity and intuition to enter the scholarly research process while broadening what ‘counts’ as an archive” (Kirsch and Rohan 9).

⁴ “Nothing is less reliable, nothing is less clear today than the word ‘archive’” (Derrida 90).

⁵ Volume 22.3 of *The Lion and the Unicorn* is devoted to children’s literature archives, with essays profiling major collections and their founders. See also Campbell.

⁶ In “One-Way Street” (1928), for example, Benjamin attempts a phenomenology of childhood, offering scenes of child reading, child pilfering, and child hiding, and in *Berlin Childhood around 1900* he meditates upon his own childhood experiences in the city, in some ways anticipating the *Arcades Project*. Klaus Doderer writes that Benjamin understood childhood “as a sort of philosophical place in which knowledge is absorbed and assimilated” (174). Benjamin deserves much fuller consideration as a theorist of children’s literature and culture.

⁷ Writes Lundin, in “A Dukedom Large Enough”:

Special collections, in their diversity of text and context, are poised to respond to a growing attention to the history of print culture, a new respect for popular culture, and a developing interest in the social history of how culture is produced and received. Before the field of Cultural Studies became popular, librarians were organizing collections in ways that honor what D. F. McKenzie calls “the sociology of texts”: a phrase that, in his words, “directs us to consider the human motives and interactions which texts involve at every stage of their production, transmission and consumption” (6). (309–10)

⁸ Michaels talks at length about the personal journeys of collectors such as Baldwin, calling their stories “transition tales” and remarking that if we model ourselves after them, “Our autobiography in books can then find its own transition way into the special libraries of the future” (95). For would-be collectors, she recommends a practical time span for collecting corresponding to one’s own lifespan:

You can use this formula to find your own collecting span. If you are thirty in 1992, born in 1962, when you were four in 1966 your thirty-year old mother born in 1936 could be reading you something stretching back in time to *her* mother’s four-year-old memory! Certainly this is no hard and fast rule, but it does serve to demonstrate the long echo of children’s literature from the past. (45)

⁹ Thanks to Rita Smith for calling this passage to my attention.

¹⁰ “Even though public collections may be less objectionable socially and more useful academically than private collections,” insists Benjamin, “the objects get their due only in the latter.” For a collector, “ownership is the most intimate relationship that one can have to things. Not that they come alive in him; it is he who lives in them” (“Unpacking” 491–92).

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