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Treasures in Special Collections at WCU

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TREASURES IN SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AT WCU

By Christopher Borroughs



What's on Today's Agenda?

- Overview of our collection's highlights
- Potential research topics
- Suggestions for development of children's special collections



What Do We Have in Special Collections?

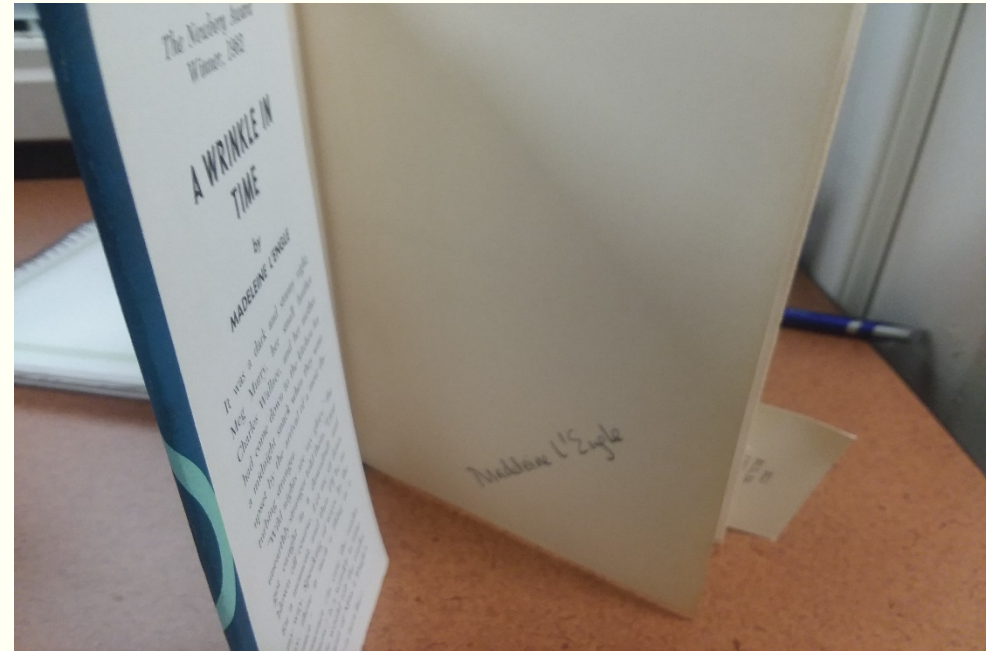
- 48 signed Newbery Medal winners and 27 signed Caldecott winners
- Extensive holdings of *The Night Before Christmas*, including manuscripts, books, and miscellaneous paraphernalia
- Large *Wind in the Willows* collection, including foreign language editions
- Beatrix Potter collection—letters, first editions of many stories, and ephemera from board games to tea sets
- Many other significant works by local authors and illustrators, including Marguerite de Angeli and Jessie Willcox Smith



Images of Collection Highlights



The *Honey Bunch* series– part of the Stratemeyer Syndicate that also published *Nancy Drew*



A signed copy of *A Wrinkle in Time*, the 1962 Newbery Medal winner by Madeleine L'Engle



What Can You Do with Special Collections?

- Study the history of illustration through the *Wind in the Willows* collection. How have techniques changed? What artistic mediums seem dominant in an era?
- Observe how depictions of and writings about race have progressed through time; for example, a collection of Paul Laurence Dunbar's poetry is prefaced with a rather condescending introduction. Why is it important how race is taught to children?
- Investigate the contents of the children's magazine compilations—*St. Nicholas* and *Wide Awake*. What stories are chosen, and what lessons are they teaching young readers?



What Can You do with Special Collections? (part 2)

- The collection houses a complete set of children's literature textbooks from the early 20th century (*Journeys through Bookland*). What could the stories selected tell us about the curriculum's goals?
- Conduct an investigation of WCU's Stratemeyer Syndicate Holdings. Ask questions about how titles like *Honey Bunch* or *Bunny Brown* depict and/or challenge gender norms of their eras.



How Do You Choose Books for a Special Collection?

- Is the book authored or illustrated by someone local?
- Is the book a rare edition of a prominent classic?
- Is the book autographed or otherwise significant?
- Is the book rare within your vicinity (check WorldCat)?
- Is the book considered valuable on viaLibri?
- Do you find the book otherwise significant for researchers, especially for the collection you have in mind (e.g. science, children's literature, or history)?



Conclusion

- The Special Collections houses numerous holdings that will doubtless interest researchers, from autographed Newbery Medalists to archived children's magazines and textbooks.
- Research possibilities are everywhere, whether you choose to investigate the textbook samples of *Journeys through Bookland* or trace the progression of illustrations through time with *The Wind in the Willows* collection.
- And our guidelines for accession and weeding can be used as a starting point for determining your own special collection.
- Thank you for joining my presentation today.

