

COMING TO *LIFE*

Movable Books Delight Children
for Centuries

BY SUZAN ALTERI



One of the gems of the Baldwin Library of Historical Children's Literature is its large collection of old movable books and toys created to delight thousands of people, young and old alike. The fact that somehow these materials survived the tugging and tearing of children only makes their presence in the collection all the more awe-inspiring. Although volvelles — rotating paper disks sewed into a book — were present in adult books beginning in the fourteenth century, it was almost five centuries later that movable parts were added to books for children. While readers today are very familiar with the work of Robert Sabuda and Matthew Reinhart that is sold in bookstores all over the world, they might not be aware of the tradition that informs today's pop-up books.

LEFT AND RIGHT:
Tip & Top and the Moon Rocket, V. Kubasta
(1964)

Beginning in the very late eighteenth century, a publisher in Great Britain developed the Harlequinade, a nearly version of today's lift-the-flapbooks. Suddenly readers were able to transform pictures and text into different scenes right before their eyes. These books, also called *Metamorphoses*, continued to be published well into the mid-nineteenth century, usually with religious overtones about good and evil, life and death. Around the mid-eighteenth century, elaborate paper creations termed "peepshows" or tunnel books gave the illusion of theatre stage sets. Although these accordion style, layered scenes contained no text, they served as an



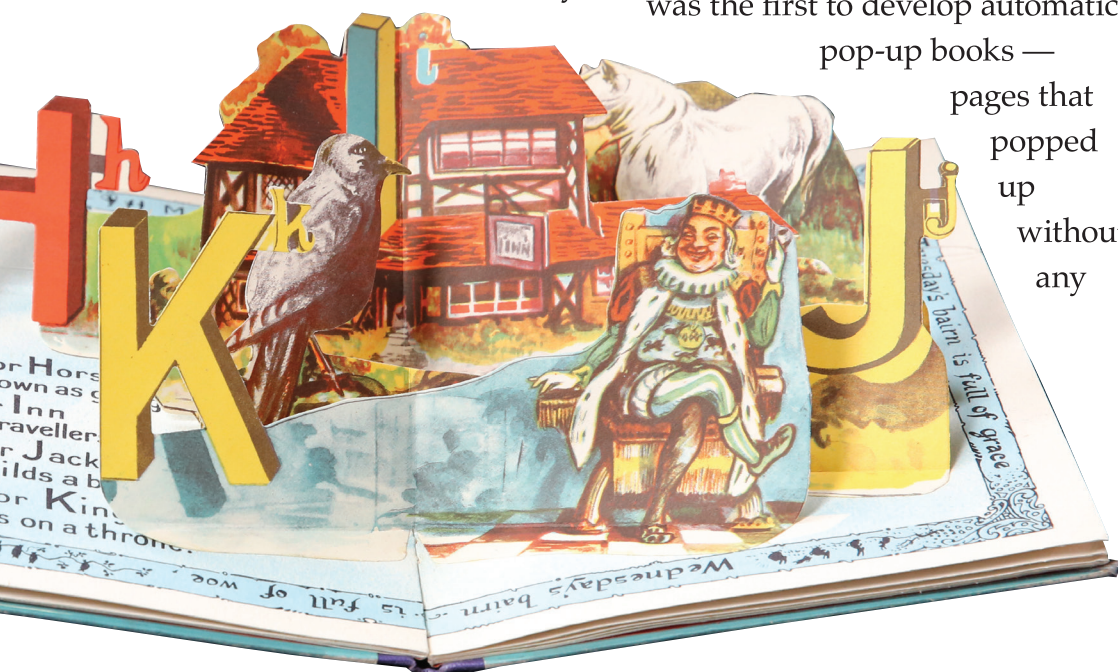
important step in the development of later movable and pop-up books.

One particularly unique, interactive movable, *The History of Little Fanny: Exemplified in a Series of Figures* was published by London printers S. and J. Fuller in 1810. This set contained a small 15-page book of scenes along with one paper doll and seven different outfits. Child readers were encouraged to dress Fanny for each scene along a journey from Fanny's disobedience, to begging on the street, to eventual restoration with her family after promising to be good. During this time, children's literature was not necessarily about entertainment, but more focused on educating the child and building moral character.

More intricate paper engineering occurred in the

mid-nineteenth century, as printing technologies and literacy

BELOW:
ABC in Living Models, Printed in England.
c. 1935



developed, to keep pace with the public demand for engaging reading material. Around 1850, Dean and Son — one of the premier publishers for movable and novelty children's books — began printing their long-running series of "Scenic Books." These marked the first real appearance of images that could be popped up by readers. Working from their own studio in Ludgate Hill, the publisher "animated" layered pop-up pictures using the techniques of peep shows and pull ribbons. The reader would open the page, pull the ribbon, and voila, a scene from classics such as *Cinderella*, or, *The Little Glass Slipper* appeared before their eyes.

The renaissance of early movable books came from Germany through the works of Lothar Meggendorfer, Ernest Nister, and Raphael Tuck. Nister was the first to develop automatic pop-up books —

pages that popped up without any

RIGHT:
Toyland, an Animated Book
Julian Wehr.
(1944)





LEFT:
Animated Antics in Playland
Julian Wehr.
(1944)

manual maneuvering — while Meggendorfer was the undisputed king of pull-tabs that controlled an elaborate series of mechanical movements. Tuck, who later immigrated to Great Britain, employed a variety of novel methods to his books, including embossing, die-cutting, and chromolithography to enchant readers. Although the Baldwin Library holds a few hundred of Nister and Tuck books, of particular interest is Meggendorfer's *Always Jolly!* and *Princess Rose-Petal and her Adventures*. The moving parts in these books are so complex that even UF students are in awe of the engineering feats employed by this German author and illustrator. In *Princess Rose-Petal* a single pull-tab initiates a series of paper levers which animate multiple features on a page, with each lever attached by a tiny screw barely visible to the reader.

The World Wars disrupted relationships between Europe and Great Britain, allowing for movable book production to flourish in the US. Although E. P. Dutton Publishing had partnered with Ernest Nister to distribute his works in America, it wasn't until the 1940s that the US could claim to be the center of movable

book publication with a series of books by illustrator and artist Julian Wehr. Wehr created over 30 animated books during his career, each vibrantly illustrated, which utilized his patented, unique method of a pull-tab that could move in any direction to give characters multiple movements. One of Wehr's more uncommon, but delightful books, *Animated Antics in Playland*, features various stuffed toys getting into trouble while their owners are away. Beginning in the 1950s, Central Europe re-entered the movable

BELOW:
Fairy Tales in Wonderland
E. Stuart Hardy and Others.
(c. 1910)



book market when Czech architect and artist Vojtech Kubasta started creating and publishing three-dimensional pop-up books. His works were sold in 24 languages, and their complexity was reminiscent of Meggendorfer. Kubasta's pop-ups, such as *Tip & Top* and *the Moon Rocket*, were enjoyed by millions of children worldwide.

The collection of movable books in the Baldwin Library of Historical Children's Literature illustrate the long history of how

authors, illustrators, and

publishers engage with child readers. Each book is a wonderful example of construction and design, and every year students from UF's Materials Engineering program visit the collection to study these feats made from something as simple as paper. Researchers from around the world visit to see the influence of movable books on child play, and graduate students at UF work towards 4-D digital models of texts to engage with people who are not able to come to the University to see these marvels. The Baldwin Library, for its part, continues to acquire rare and popular movable works intended for children in order to keep this rich history alive.

LEFT: *Cinderella, or, The Glass Slipper*, Dean and Son. (185-)

ABOVE:
Metamorphosis, Printed by Solomon Wiatt. (1810)



CINDERELLA ;
OR. THE LITTLE GLASS SLIPPER.

... there lived a gentleman, whose wife, a very kind
... only daughter, a pretty girl of

