About our collection

Homerton College, Cambridge is unique amongst the Cambridge Colleges in being home to a large special collection of over 10,000 children’s books. These are housed in the Main College Library and are borrowable by any member of the University with a research interest in children’s literature. The collection dates from the 1960s to the present day and new books are purchased monthly, in order to keep up with current trends and award winning fiction in the UK and the US. Chosen to appeal to all readers, the collection ranges from picture books through to Young Adult fiction, and also includes many classic children’s stories.

Thanks to a generous donation by Professor Maria Nikolajeva, the Children’s Literature Collection also contains over 150 different illustrated editions of Alice in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll, in a wide variety of languages. Many featured in our exhibition during the recent Alice through the Ages Conference, held in association with the Lewis Carroll Society.

The Library also holds a collection of nearly 1,000 catalogued non-borrowable rare children’s books and the numbers are continually increasing due to a succession of generous donations. Highlights include a hornbook, signed works by Kenneth Grahame (and E. H. Shepard), a set of Victorian chapbooks, works by Randolph Caldecott and many more. The collection’s strength lies particularly in 19th century didactic fiction as well as the ability to provide the researcher with snapshots into families reading habits from the 1920s-40s.

In 2013, Homerton acquired a substantial collection of over 5000 children’s annuals, ranging in date from the 1870s right up to material from the 1970s. The Lealan Collection, named after its collector, is currently stored offsite.

**Did you know?**

- Borrowable children’s fiction collection of 10,000 books.
- Over 1,000 catalogued rare children’s books.
- If you are not a member of Homerton College, you can still register to borrow and access the Library if you are studying Children’s Literature.