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# From A to Z: An Exhibition of ABC Books Selected from the John O.C. McCrillis Collection

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# From A to Z

## **An Exhibition of ABC Books Selected from the John O.C. McCrillis Collection**

March through June 1998  
Curator of the exhibition, Alesandra M. Schmidt

The Watkinson Library at Trinity College  
Hartford, Connecticut



Item3

## **Introduction**

Is there any one of us who does not recall with affection a favorite ABC book? If we did not actually learn our letters from such a book, chances are we loved being read to from it or enjoyed just holding it, looking through its pages--dog-eared despite its "indestructible" guarantee--at the amusing illustrations that accompanied each letter of the alphabet. Chances are, too, that in this congenial activity we had no idea we were being educated about letters or morals or anything else.

And this is one of the delights of alphabet books as we know them. Visual and verbal artistry conceal didactic purpose; learning seems accidental. Juvenile readers are entertained, and the adult authors and illustrators of these books have a splendid time creating new ways to depict the 26 letters of our alphabet. Collecting ABC books can be an especially enjoyable occupation, and the Watkinson Library is extremely fortunate to be the recipient of one bibliophile's fascination with the alphabet.

The nearly 70 ABC books on display in this exhibition are selected from the collection of over 350 alphabet books given to the Watkinson Library in 1996 by John O. C. McCrillis. The donor, known widely as one of the country's leading calligraphers and book designers, most notably for his distinguished work with Yale University Press from 1952 to 1979, is a graphic artist whose interest in fine printing, unusual text, and outstanding illustration is revealed in the books he has collected. The range of publishing dates is from 1808 to the 1980s, with American imprints predominant. Although most books in the McCrillis collection are for young readers, some are intended for adults and others are rare advertising pamphlets. The variety of alphabet books in the collection is well represented here, and visitors to this exhibition, young or old, will find much to delight in.

The books selected for display are arranged chronologically by date of publication, beginning with an 1808 Philadelphia alphabet in German text and concluding with an illustrated bird alphabet first published in Massachusetts in 1986. In the bibliographic descriptions provided in each display case, as well as in the accompanying exhibition catalog, the author's name appears first, followed by title, illustrator (when appropriate) or other contributor, place of publication and date, pagination, size (height in centimeters) and notes. Often author and illustrator are the same. For many early books, names of author and illustrator are unknown and the title appears first.

## **Acknowledgments**

Preparation of this exhibition and catalog was a collaborative effort of the best kind. In addition to designing the catalog, John McCrillis contributed text and supplied photographs. Color illustrations were made possible through the generosity of the printer, Phoenix Press, Inc. The ABC books were cataloged by Kimberly Weatherford, Trinity College Catalog Librarian, and these bibliographic descriptions were incorporated in the catalog checklist and exhibition labels. Publication of the catalog was underwritten by the Watkinson Library/Trinity College Library Associates and Phoenix Press, Inc. As always, the support of Stephen Peterson, College Librarian, and the Watkinson Library staff--Jeffrey Kaimowitz, Curator of the Watkinson Library, and Peter Knapp, College Archivist--was invaluable.

## **Collector's Statement**

I began buying alphabet books for my daughter, Susan, when she was about two years old. The first book I acquired for her was *A Apple Pie*, by Kate Greenaway (London: Frederick Warne & Co., Ltd., ca. 1900), not shown in the exhibition. Like most parents, my wife, Barbara, and I were interested in finding attractive books that we would enjoy reading aloud and that our daughter would like to look at by herself as she began to read independently. Our training in art (we are both graduates of the Rhode Island School of Design) and my work as a graphic artist and book designer led us quite naturally to look for books with distinctive design and images, as well as unusual text.

One book led to another, and it wasn't long before we realized that we were beginning a collection of ABC books. Susan had many other books to read as she grew up. I don't want to give the impression that she had only one category of interests, but with a few ABC books as a starter, I began to concentrate on that particular aspect to enlarge the collection.

For many years after our daughter had outgrown the first books we had acquired, I found myself extending the thematic, chronological, and geographical range of our developing collection, while still concentrating on the Roman alphabet and American imprints. I began to collect adult alphabet books and advertising pamphlets, along with original copies or excellent facsimiles of early books. So, book-buying for a child learning to read became, over the years, a fascinating hobby from which I retired only recently, in the last decade.

The ABC books in this collection span a period between 1808 and 1986 and present social history of succeeding generations in a pleasing and artistic form. The early books were produced before the days of electricity, indoor plumbing, the automobile and radio, not to mention television. Life was simpler, travel was limited, and books were in great demand as a source of entertainment. The alphabet book was one of the most popular diversions. ABC books show the costumes, customs, toys, pets, family interests, modes of travel, and trades of various kinds, reflecting changes from one generation to the next.

While most of the early books were designed for children, some commercial enterprises used this form as a means to advertise their products. A clever rhyme with suitable illustration readily induced people to investigate the product advertised. Most of these books did not endure in the same manner as a cherished book for a child. Because of their scarcity, they have become treasured collectors' items. My collection includes several.

Among many of the well-known authors and illustrators of children's books here represented are Walter Crane, Edward Lear, Kate Greenaway, Dr. Seuss, and

Edward Gorey. Many of the books in the collection are limited editions.

Besides books for children, there are alphabet books for adults on various subjects, such as gardening, architecture, photography, cursive letters, and a printer's abecedarium.

Some books were so popular they came out in several versions by different illustrators. One example is *The History of An Apple Pie*. It was published for the first time in 1823. Kate Greenaway's version, as I've mentioned, appeared first about 1900 and is still in print. Another popular title is *Peter Piper's Practical Principles of Plain and Perfect Pronunciation*, a classic, with the first American edition published in 1830. Mergenthaler Linotype Co., of Brooklyn, New York, produced an edition of it in 1936, assigning the leading type designers of that period a letter each. Bruce Rogers, Bill Dwiggin, and Carl Rollins were among the designers chosen. Bruce Rogers even designed a page for the ampersand which was not in the original volume. In the hardbound edition of the Mergenthaler book, the ampersand page is printed on sandpaper.

*Printer's Abecedarium*, published by David Godine in 1974, is a book which I created. The decorative initials were adapted from hand-illuminated initials in Yale's copy of *The Catholicon* by Johannes Balbus, printed in Mainz in 1460, and attributed to Johann Gutenberg. The type, which I hand-set, is Inkunabula, made by a foundry in Italy in the 1920s. The introduction to the book is by Dale Roylance, former head of the Arts of the Book Collection at Yale University.

*ABC: Animals, Birds, and Other Creatures* was hand-set and printed by me in 1979 on my Washington hand press. The illustrations are from original wood engravings used in a 19th-century edition of Webster's dictionary, selected and borrowed from the collection of over 4000 in the Arts of the Book Collection at Yale. The couplets for each letter were composed by me, and the introduction is again by Dale Roylance.

Various printing methods have been used in the production of these books, including engraving, hand-colored woodcuts, chromolithography, Linotype with metal cuts, and offset lithography.-- *John O. C. McCrillis*

## Case 1

Shown here are early American and English alphabet books, some illustrated with hand-colored woodcuts. Except for the Joseph Champion handbook (#1) and the George Cruikshank alphabet (#6), these charming little books were intended to instruct young readers. All were published in the first half of the 19th century.

*Note:* Certain bibliographic conventions are used with dates of publication. The letter "c" preceding a date indicates copyright year (e.g., c1884). The abbreviation "ca." (for "circa") preceding a date indicates approximate year of publication (e.g., ca. 1890). Brackets surrounding a date indicate that evidence is lacking and a publication year cannot be assigned with certainty (e.g., [185-?], for probable decade).



Item 7

- 1.**  
Champion, Joseph. **A new and elegant sett [sic] of copies in German text, with the engrossing alphabet.** Philadelphia: J. Bioren, 1808. [16] leaves; 6 cm.
- 2.**  
**The young child's A, B, C, or, First book.** New York: S. Wood & Sons; Baltimore: S. S. Wood & Co., [1818]. 16 p.; 11 cm.
- 3.**  
**The silver toy, or, Picture alphabet: for the entertainment and instruction of children in the nursery.** Wellington [England]: Printed by F. Houlston and Son, [182-?]. 30 p.; 11 cm.
- 4.**  
**Z. The history of an apple pie.** London: Printed for Harris and Son, 1823 (London: S. and R. Bentley). [18] leaves; 18 cm. ("Harris's cabinet of amusement and instruction, no. 6.")

5.

**The picture alphabet, or, ABC in rhyme.** New Haven: S. Babcock, [ca. 1830?]. 8 p.; 90 mm. Miniature book.

6.

Cruikshank, George. **A comic alphabet.** [London]: Arts Council of Great Britain, [1975?]. [24] leaves; 14 cm. Facsimile reprint. Originally published: Pentonville [England]: G. Cruikshank, 1836. Leaves accordion-folded.

7.

**The little child's ABC.** Providence: G. P. Daniels, 1847. [15] p.; 17 cm.

8.

**Joseph's A B C book.** Worcester: H. J. Howland, [185-?]. 8 p.; 76 mm. Miniature book.

## Case 2

In the second half of the 19th century, technical advances, especially the development of chromolithography, contributed to changes in book format. Illustrations became both more colorful and more prominent. As several of the items shown here suggest (for example, #9), books were now larger, though miniatures and small books had not lost their appeal.

ABC titles were included routinely in McLoughlin Brothers' popular line of juvenile publications (#10 and #11), and businesses used alphabet rhymes to advertise their products (#12, #13, and #15). Kate Greenaway, like other well known illustrators of the period, could not resist making an alphabet book of her own (#14). Only the cover can be displayed here; in this miniature book, the emphasis is on the illustrations--there are no verses, and letters are decorated with watercolors of children playing.



Item13

9.

Pease, Richard H. **Grandpapa Pease's illustrated alphabet.** Albany [N.Y.]: Fisk & Little, [ca. 1850]. [8] leaves; 27 cm.

10.

**Little folk's ABC.** [New York]: McLoughlin Bros., [187-?]. [14] p.; 27 cm.

11.

**Little pet's picture alphabet.** New York: McLoughlin Bros., [between 1870 and 1886]. [13] p.; 17 cm.

12.

Enoch Morgan's Sons Co. **An easy task for young students and older workers.** [New York]: Enoch Morgan's Sons Co., [188-?]. [16] p.; 9 cm. Advertising ABC in verse promoting Sapolio, a household cleanser produced by Enoch Morgan's Sons Co.

13.

**The picture alphabet.** New York: Van Campen & Johnson, [c1884]. [12] p.; 18 cm. Advertising ABC in verse with various products mentioned.

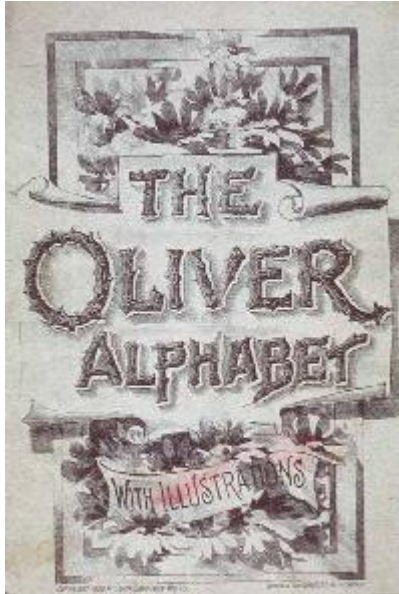
14.

Greenaway, Kate. **Kate Greenaway's alphabet.** London; New York: G. Routledge, [1885?]. [28] p.; 73 mm. Miniature book.



15.

**The Oliver alphabet.** [South Bend, Ind.]: South Bend Iron Works, c1889. (Chicago: Shober & Carqueville Litho. Co.). [24] p.; 17 cm. Advertising ABC in verse promoting the Oliver "chilled plow."



### Case 3

A mix of the sophisticated and the traditional characterizes ABC books published towards the end of the 19th century. McLoughlin Brothers' picture books (#17 and #18), often featuring children at play with animals or toys, proved to be a commercial success and were imitated by other publishers (#16 and #19). At about the same time, in the 1880s, Palmer Cox--artist, cartoonist, and journalist--created the first Brownies story. Shown here are the Brownies cavorting in an alphabet wonderland (#20). Cox produced books about the Brownies, imaginary little "people" of different nationalities, well into the 1920s.

Still another approach to the alphabet is demonstrated by William Nicholson's striking series of portraits, executed in the poster art style this graphic artist developed (#21). The letter "A" is illustrated by a self-portrait of the artist. The letter "X," on display, is illustrated by a portrait of a wood engraver, or "xylographer."

16.

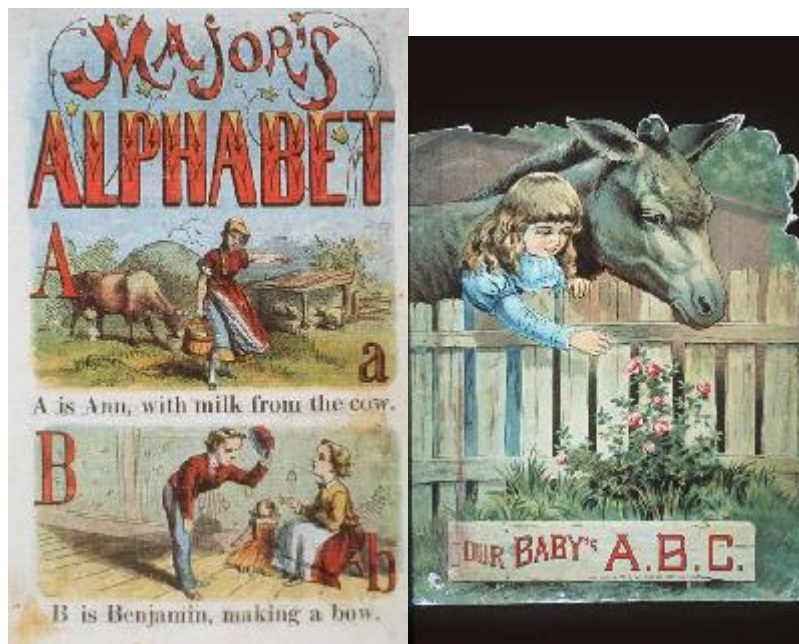
Floyd, Grace C. **Dolly at home ABC**. New York: Merrimack, [19--?]. [14] p.; 27 cm. Replica of antique original, ca. 1890.

17.

**Major's alphabet**. New York: McLoughlin Bros., [ca. 1890?]. [10] p.; 23 cm.

18.

Rigney, William J. **Our baby's A B C**. New York: McLoughlin Bros., c1891. [12] p.; 31 cm.



Item 18

19.

**Our pets A B C book**. New York: W. B. Perkins, c1895. (Buffalo: Koerner & Hayes). [12] p.; 31 cm.

20.

Cox, Palmer. **Brownies in Wonderland A B C**. Chicago: Donohue Henneberry, c1896. [12] p.; 24 cm. ("Nonsense book series.")

21.

Nicholson, William, Sir. **An alphabet**. London: Heinemann; San Francisco: A. Wofsy Fine Arts, 1975. [27] leaves; 32 cm. Reprint of the 1897 ed. published by Heinemann, London.

#### Case 4

At the turn of the century, McLoughlin Brothers continued to publish ABC books (#23, #25, and #26), as did its English counterpart, Raphael Tuck & Sons (#22), whose New York and London houses merged in the 1890s. Many new subjects were added to the swiftly expanding ABC repertoire. A few examples are the celebration of Christmas (#26), American military and naval forces (#24), and the customs and costumes of children in other countries (#27).

The ABC theme continued to be used by companies for advertising purposes. B. F. Goodrich's "primer" (# 28), promoting Palmer tires, is a stunning example. Though intended for the adults who would be purchasing tires, the rhymes and illustrations could be enjoyed by children.

#### 22.

**All round the year ABC.** New York: Raphael Tuck & Sons, c1898. [14] p.; 28 cm. ("Father Tuck's nursery series, no. 2470.")

#### 23.

**The merry alphabet.** New York: McLoughlin Bros., c1899. [14] p.; 28 cm. ("Merry alphabet series, no. 270.")

#### 24.

**The Army & Navy A B C.** Chicago: George M. Hill, [between 1899 and 1901]. [47] p.; 25 cm.



25.

**Little darling's ABC.** New York: McLoughlin Bros., c1900. [8] p.; 22 cm.

26.

Wells, Carolyn. **Merry Christmas A B C.** Springfield, Mass.: McLoughlin Bros., [ca. 1900]. [8] p.; 25 cm.

27.

Mayer, Henry. **Little people: an alphabet.** Pictures by Henry Mayer; verses by T. W. H. Crosland. New York: Frederick A. Stokes, c1902. 94 p.; 14 cm. ("Dumpy books for children, no. 5.")

28.

B. F. Goodrich Company. **Ye primer: a rhyme book on ye letters of ye alphabet, containing also certain short truths.** New York: B. F. Goodrich Co., [ca. 1902]. [28] p.; 28 cm. Advertising ABC in verse promoting Palmer tires.

## Case 5

Illustrations of animals and birds were staples of earlier ABC books, especially in association with children, as in McLoughlin Brothers publications. Fresh approaches to incorporating the world of nature in alphabet books can be seen here in two examples of early 20th-century titles. In one, the animals of Noah's ark are used unabashedly to advertise a liniment (#31). In the other, exotic birds are celebrated for their own sake (#33). For the letters "A" through "F," William Stecher selected the albatross, bird of paradise, cockatoo, dodo, eagle, and flamingo. The Xema, a northern gull, and the Zeamidura, mourning dove, are used for the letters "X" and "Z."

The worlds of literature and history also were adapted to the ABC book. The story of Hiawatha is told through the alphabet (#30), and famous historical characters are treated more than a bit facetiously (#29). Poetry and nature are united charmingly in an alphabet of watercolors created by an artist for her granddaughter (#32). By the beginning of the 20th century, the alphabet book had come into its own as a vehicle for personal, creative expression, with almost any subject or theme alphabetized and illustrated--usually for the pleasure of children, but often for adults.

**29.**

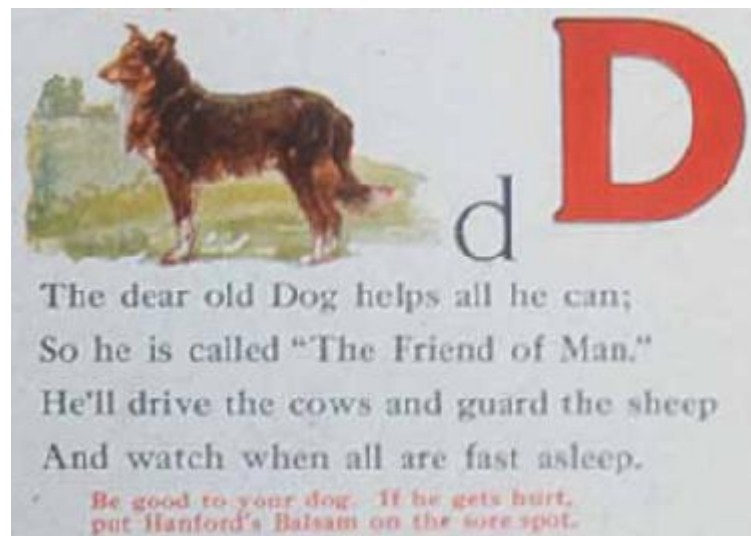
Nesbit, Wilbur D. **An alphabet of history.** The words by Wilbur D. Nesbit; the pictures by Ellsworth Young. San Francisco: Paul Elder, c1905. [28] p.; 26 cm.

**30.**

Holbrook, Florence. **Hiawatha alphabet.** Illustrated by H. D. Pohl. Chicago: Rand McNally, c1910. [31] leaves; 28 cm.

**31.**

**The Noah's ark primer.** Syracuse, N.Y.: G. C. Hanford Mfg. Co., c1912. [12] p.; 18 cm. Advertising ABC in verse promoting liniment, Hanford's Balsam of Myrrh.



**32.**

Stark, Rose Isabella. **A a apple: Rose Isabella Stark's alphabet.** London: Pelham, 1979. [30] p.; 23 cm. Facsimile of the original 1915 portfolio of watercolors created by Stark for her granddaughter.



Item 33

**33.**

Stecher, William F. **A B C book of birds.** Drawings by Will. F. Stecher; sayings by Carolyn S. Hodgman. Rochester, N.Y.: Stecher Litho. Co., c1916. [12] p.; 35 cm.

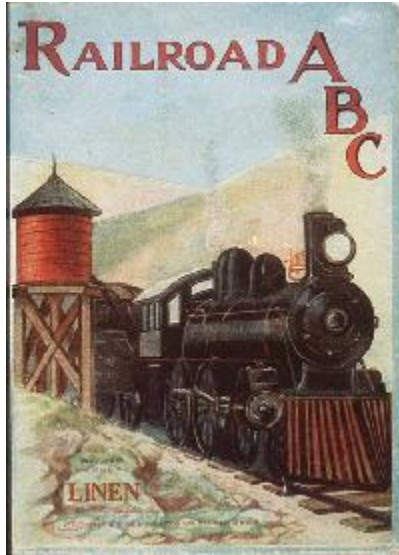
**Case 6**

Linen books for children were published in the 19th century, many by McLoughlin Brothers (see, for example, #17 in *Case 3*). In the first quarter of the 20th century and later, they were commonplace. The linen ABC shown here (#34) is in excellent condition, attributable at least in part to its sturdy construction. The theme of this book, railroads, held the same fascination for children in 1918 as spaceships do today.

A somewhat different twist in advertising alphabet books can be seen with the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company's coloring ABC book (#38). As a special bonus, in a pre-television age, the adult purchasers of policies had something to bring home for the entertainment of their children. The Hanford Manufacturing Company seems not to have run out of ideas to promote their "Balsam of Myrrh." The booklet shown here (#35) can be compared with an earlier publication (see # 31, in *Case 5*).

Rachel Field, a popular illustrator of the time, chose first names for her alphabet book, beginning with "A" for "Ann." She ran into a little trouble, as can be seen here, with "Z" (#36). The lithographing company, Stecher, following the success of its alphabet book of birds that had appeared a decade earlier (see #33, in *Case 5*), produced a similar book of animals (#37).

**34. Railroad ABC.** New York: S. Gabriel Sons, c1918. [10] p.; 20 cm.



**35.**  
**ABC jingles.** Syracuse, N.Y.: G. C. Hanford Mfg. Co., c1920. [14] p.; 14 cm.  
Advertising ABC in verse promoting liniment, Hanford's Balsam of Myrrh.

**36.**  
Field, Rachel. **An alphabet for boys and girls.** Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1926. [57] p.; 15 cm.

**37.**  
Rogers, Julia Anne. **ABC book of animals.** Rochester, N.Y.: Stecher Litho. Co., c1927. [14] p.; 35 cm.

**38.**  
**Metropolitan Life Insurance Co. ABC.** New York: Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, [ca. 1935?]. [14] p.; 20 cm. An ABC coloring book about health.

## Case 7

Three of the books on display here were intended for adults (#39, #41, and #43). The artistry and cleverness of the first (#39) can be seen readily with the illustration shown of Peter Piper and the accompanying tongue-twisting verse. Each page in the book was designed and illustrated by a specially assigned typographer and artist. The designer and illustrator for the Peter Piper page is John Averill, and the type is set in Linotype Scotch.

Not quite so clever, but both pleasing and practical, is a cookbook (#41), one of several similar culinary titles published in the 1950s by Peter Pauper Press. Almost too clever for some tastes is Edward Gorey's deliciously macabre collection of tales (#43). From the book's dustjacket: ". . . an Appalling Alphabet which introduces a Gallery of enchanting tots and produces a Gasp of involuntary mirth when they attain their Dreadful Demises." Definitely not for children.

Dr. Seuss (#40) and zoo animals (#42) are welcome antidotes to Gorey's alphabet. Both are definitely for children, as well as for adults. Dr. Seuss, not content with the traditional alphabet, has invented a new one. Feodor Rojankovsky's approach to the alphabet, in contrast, is straightforward and simple.

### 39.

**Peter Piper's practical principles of plain & perfect pronunciation.** Brooklyn, N.Y.: Mergenthaler Linotype Co., c1936. 99 p.; 21 cm.

### 40.

Seuss, Dr. **On beyond zebra.** New York: Random House, c1955. [60] p.; 29 cm.

### 41.

Beilenson, Edna. **The ABC of chafing dish cookery.** Decorations by Ruth McCrea. Mount Vernon, N.Y.: Peter Pauper Press, c1956. 61 p.; 19 cm.

### 42.

Rojankovsky, Feodor. **Animals in the zoo.** [New York]: Random House, 1973, c1962. [32] p.; 23 cm.

### 43.

Gorey, Edward. **The Gashlycrumb tinies, or, After the outing.** New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1981. [28] leaves; 18 cm. Reissue of 1962 ed. published in New York by Simon & Schuster.



## Case 8

Comparing the use of one letter of the alphabet, the letter "L," in two very different books brings to mind some of the cultural changes that have taken place in the past hundred years or so. Eric Sloane's nostalgic look at America's past (#44) gives us drawings of a locomotive and a log cabin for "L." In Isaac Asimov's alphabet book of the space age (#47), we see photographs of a lunar module and a lift-off.

A drawing of a spotted lizard illustrates the same letter in a small alphabet book prepared by children on an Indian Reserve in Southern Ontario (#46). One wonders if the young artist, so aware of the natural world, had ever seen a photograph of a lunar module, with its spider-like legs.

Ecological awareness of the 1960s is evident in the imaginative story of an apricot that falls to the ground in a meadow (#48). Bees, birds, and flowers discover the apricot, which finally is eaten to its seed by a chicken and, eventually, becomes a new, young apricot tree. Another kind of tree is seen in Dr. Seuss's alphabet book (#45)--the "tuttle-tuttle tree," for "ten tired turtles."

### 44.

Sloane, Eric. **ABC book of early Americana: a sketchbook of antiquities and American firsts.** Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, c1963. [59] p.; 29 cm.

### 45.

Seuss, Dr. **Dr. Seuss's ABC.** New York: Beginner Books, c1963. 63 p.; 24 cm.

### 46.

**Alphabet book.** Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969, c1968. [59] p.; 15 cm. "Prepared by children five to eight years of age on the Kettle Point Indian Reserve in southwestern Ontario."

### 47.

Asimov, Isaac. **ABC's of space.** New York: Walker, 1969. 47 p.; 29 cm.

### 48.

Miles, Miska. **Apricot ABC.** Illustrated by Peter Parnall. Boston: Little, Brown, c1969. [32] p.; 23 cm.

## Case 9

The history of printing is yet another subject celebrated by an alphabet book (#49). In this beautifully crafted abecedarium by John O. C. McCrillis, important early printers from Aldus Manutius to Gunther Zainer are profiled. Accompanying the entry for each printer is a two-color initial designed by McCrillis. The Gothic letters were adapted from the illuminated initials found in Yale University's copy of the *Catholicon*, believed to have been printed by Gutenberg in 1460.

The decorated borders on each page of Mitsumasa Anno's witty alphabet (#50) suggest the style of an earlier time, but there is nothing straightforward here. Every image is meant to provide an exercise in observation and imagination. How many words beginning with the letter "F" are represented here in pictures?

African tribes are the subject of a splendid picture book that won the Caldecott Award in 1977 (#51). In her introduction, Margaret Musgrove writes: "I hope that this collection will give the reader not only a feeling for the vastness of the African continent and the variety of her peoples but for the place that tradition holds at the very heart of African life."

Modern pop-up books have their origins in the movable picture books produced in the 19th century. There was something of a pop-up craze in the 1970s, in both the United States and Europe, and John Stejan's *Sesame Street ABC* is a fine example (#52). In this alphabet book, "A" is for "alligator" and "Z" is for "zoo."

### 49.

McCrillis, John O. C. **Printer's abecedarium**. Edited by Susan C. McCrillis. Boston: D. R. Godine, c1974. [64] p.; 27 cm.

### 50.

Anno, Mitsumasa. **Anno's alphabet: an adventure in imagination**. New York: Crowell, 1975, c1974. [64] p.; 26 cm.

### 51.

Musgrove, Margaret. **Ashanti to Zulu: African traditions**. Pictures by Leo and Diane Dillon. New York: Dial Press, c1976. [32] p.; 33 cm.

### 52.

Strejan, John. **The alphabet book**. Illustrations by John Strejan; paper engineering by Ib Penick. [New York]: Random House, [1977?]. [19] p.; 24 cm. ("A Sesame Street pop-up, no. 1.")

## Case 10

One of the most distinguished pop-up books published in the 1970s, Robert Crowther's alphabet book is a masterpiece of imagination and paper engineering (#53). In this novel sequence of wild life, a frog follows an elephant, and a giraffe precedes a hen.

Recognized as a master of art deco design, Erté (his real name was Romain de Tertyeff) was a painter, sculptor, lithographer, and set designer perhaps best known for his creation of the "Erté woman" and for his association with *Harper's Bazaar*. Shown here is Erté's sophisticated interpretation of the letter "Z" (#54).

Grover, one of Sesame Street's favorite muppets, demonstrates his flexibility by forming the letters "I" and "J" (#55). A kingfisher and lizard join the parade in a Shaker ABC (#56). An illustration of a moose appears opposite an original couplet by John O. C. McCrillis in a delightful ABC which McCrillis designed and printed on his Washington hand press (#57). The illustrations in this book are reproduced from 19th-century wood engravings made originally for the Merriam-Webster dictionary.

### 53.

Crowther, Robert. **The most amazing hide and seek alphabet book.** Middlesex, England: Kestrel Books; New York: Viking Press, 1977. [12] p.; 23 cm.

### 54.

Erté. **Erté graphics: five complete suites reproduced in full color.** Preface by Salome Estorick. New York: Dover Publications, c1978. 46 p.; 31 cm. Erté's Alphabet suite, begun in 1924, was first published in 1977.

### 55.

Murdocca, Sal. **Grover's own alphabet; featuring Grover, a Jim Henson Muppet.** [New York]: Western Publishing Co., c1978. [30] p.; 17 cm. ("A Sesame Street tell-a tale book.")

### 56.

**A Peaceable kingdom: the Shaker abecedarius.** Illustrated by Alice and Martin Provensen; afterword by Richard Meran Barsam. New York: Viking Press, 1978. [42] p.; 18 cm. Text published in Shaker Manifesto of July 1882 under title: **Rhymes of animals.**

### 57.

McCrillis, John O. C. **ABC: animals, birds & other creatures.** With an introduction by Dale Roylance. Branford, Conn.: Penny-Whistle Press, 1979. 64 p.; 13 cm. Limited to 100 copies.

## Case 11

Animals, a favorite subject from the 19th century on, are featured or included in all but one of the ABCs on display here. Rodger McPhail's clever illustrations of creatures not usually associated with the alphabet book, such as a bullfrog ballet dancer and a dragon darts-player, were published when the artist was in his twenties (#58). Monika Beisner's accordion-folded book is double-sided--there are color illustrations and letters on one side (dolphins form the letter "D"), and complementary black and white drawings, with verses, on the other (#59).

The inspiration for Mary Azarian's powerful alphabetic tour of rural life was her experience as a teacher in a one-room school house in northern Vermont (in Azarian's alphabet, "U" is for "underwear") (#61). The book was commissioned by the Vermont Board of Education, with Vermont's rural population in mind. A cow can be seen on the cover; other creatures are a dog, horse, lamb, owl, and toad. In contrast to this ABC of severe woodcut illustrations, Sandra Boynton's animal and adjective alphabet is simply light-hearted fun (#62), and the Edward Lear adaptation by Carol Newsom combines Lear's wonderful nonsense verse with the delightful antics of mice and their friends (#63).

### 58.

McPhail, Rodger. **Animal alphabet**. London: Illustrated London News & Sketch Ltd., 1979. p. 69-[74]; 31 cm. In v. 267, Christmas issue (1979) of *The illustrated London news*.

### 59.

Beisner, Monika. **A folding alphabet book**. [New York]: Farrar Straus Giroux, c1979 (1981 printing). [3] leaves; 10 cm. Leaves accordion-folded.

### 60.

Sherman, E. Helene. **A Boston cordial**. New Britain, Conn.: Robert E. Massmann, 1981. [32] p.; 44 mm. Limited to 500 copies. Miniature book.

### 61.

Azarian, Mary. **A farmer's alphabet**. Boston: D. R. Godine, 1981. 61 p.; 33 cm.

### 62.

Boynton, Sandra. **A is for angry**. New York: Workman, c1983. [42] p.; 24 cm.

### 63.

Lear, Edward. **An Edward Lear alphabet**. Illustrated by Carol Newsom. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books, 1983. [32] p.; 21 cm.

## Case 12

Edward Gorey's miniature alphabet book, as the title suggests, is refreshingly eclectic (#64). Because the book cannot be kept open to display its minute illustrations and very original verses, the amusing text is provided separately above this display case. Only Gorey could think of "kelp" for "K", or "crumbs" for "C."

A similarly fanciful mix of letters, activities, and verse is found in Lilian Obligado's ABC, where a fox fixes a faucet (shown here) and lobsters learn languages (#65). The antics of guinea pigs are featured in Kate Duke's light-hearted alphabet book, which is intended as a first book for very young children (#66). Text is limited to one word for each picture. Florence Cassen Mayers also has kept text to the minimum, in her very different alphabet of images drawn from objects in the collections of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (#68).

The last letter of the alphabet always has challenged ABC authors. Some, like Dr. Seuss (see #40, in Case 7), would rather invent a new alphabet than resort to a zebra for "Z." But in Bert Kitchen's splendid ABC, no apologies are needed for the zebra he has produced (#67). And what more logical selection for "Z" in the bird world than the Zebra Finch (#69)? The alphabet book, from A to Z and from the 19th century to the last decades of the 20th century, has undergone many transformations, but has it really changed?

### 64.

Gorey, Edward. **The eclectic abecedarium**. Boston: A. & D. Bromer, 1983. [61] p.; 28 mm. Limited to 400 copies. Miniature book.

### 65.

Obligado, Lilian. **Faint frogs feeling feverish: & other terrifically tantalizing tongue twisters**. New York: Viking Press, 1983. [32] p.; 27 cm.

### 66.

Duke, Kate. **The guinea pig ABC**. New York: Dutton, c1983. [32] p.; 28 cm.

### 67.

Kitchen, Bert. **Animal alphabet**. New York: Dial Books, 1984. [32] p.; 32 cm.

### 68.

Mayers, Florence Cassen. **ABC, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston**. New York: H. N. Abrams, 1986. [32] p.; 36 cm.

### 69.

Pallotta, Jerry. **The bird alphabet book**. Illustrated by Edgar Stewart. Watertown, Mass.: Charlesbridge, [1989?], c1986. [32] p.; 21 cm.