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Alice in Wonderland Exhibition at the British Library

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Red, black and white swirls and mirrors, reminiscent of dizzying optical illusions, whimsically calligraphic arrow signs, accompanied by emphatic instructions, such as “Go this way”, “Start here”, “I said this way” or “Don’t go this way”, and a towering cardboard cut-out of a bottle with a “Drink me” tag attached to it invite visitors to the British Library, be they academic readers, wandering tourists, or families with children, into the free *Alice in Wonderland Exhibition*, nestled prominently and yet seemingly casually into the heart of the library’s openly accessible entrance hall. As one of the many events across Britain marking 150 years since the publication of Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, this exhibition at the British Library took the form of an unassumingly charming display in honour of the story’s enduring cultural resonance.

As is only fitting for a library space, manuscripts took centre stage, ranging from Carroll’s diary and photographs, John Tenniel’s illustrations, and Alice Liddell’s own copy of *Alice’s Adventures Underground* (1846, gifted to the British Museum in 1948) to *The Wonderland Quadrille* (a piano piece by Charles Marriott, endorsed by Carroll and dedicated to Alice) and a digitalised copy of the first edition on a touch screen. Nevertheless, this celebration of literature related to Alice’s legacy was accompanied by a variety of quirky objects, such as a stamp-case with a “pictorial surprise” on either side (designed by Carroll himself), a Wonderland card game, wooden figurines from the 1930s (by Talfourd Toys), an Edwardian tea tin (1910) and a Tetley Tea caddy from the 1950s, a Tenniel teacup and saucer and an Alice spinning top from the 1960s (by Tritany). Carroll’s initial involvement in the design of Alice merchandise and accompanying works, such as an illustrated birthday book and the edition of *Alice* for the very young (*The Nursery Alice*, withdrawn after 10 000 copies for being “too bright and gaudy”) was explored alongside more modern and contemporary adaptations, such as a video game, named *Alice’s Adventures Off the Map*, created by university students for a competition run by the British Library last year and incorporating the themes of Oxford, Underground and Gardens – ready for visitors to play on a console in the exhibition.

In playful opposition to deliberately confusing instructions of how to navigate the displays in light of multiple possible entrance points to the exhibition, highlighted with exclamatory “Start here”, “End here” and “Keep going” signposts, a chronological trajectory through *Alice*’s publication history structured display cases to show *Alice* through the ages, from “The Original *Alice*” via “*Alice Reimagined*”, “A New *Alice* for the 20th Century”

and “*Alice* and Surrealism” to “*Alice* Today”. Manuscripts and objects make up the core of artefacts attesting to this varied history, which includes explorations of early *Alice* in translation (Carroll himself having chosen German, Italian and French as target languages), *Alice* and the Blitz (a parody by Michael Henry from 1940), *Alice* behind the Iron Curtain, *Alice* and counter-culture (1970s), and ethereal *Alice*. Illustrations and the lasting influence of Tenniel’s original images on subsequent visual adaptations and interpretations of *Alice* were another significant focus of the exhibition and provided the visual backstory to *Alice* imagery as the story’s imaginative undercurrent to this day.

The exhibition’s design, with playing cards and their red, black and white colour scheme as the overarching theme, created a visually pleasing and haptically inviting frame for such an essentially book historical display. Large posters in the shape of playing cards and enlarged cardboard illustrations, arranged around mirrors to accompany quotations from the story and occasionally striking decorations were dotted around the exhibition space to elicit delight while also tempting visitors to indulge in selfies with the large “Drink me” bottle or the telescopically enlarged Alice. Diligently composed decorative displays, such as the striped stocking-clad legs kicking up from a blue skirt between the pop-up *Alice* book by Roberta Sabuda (2003) and other modern editions, like the monochrome version by the Czech illustrator Marketa Prachaticka (1983), or a mini croquet field model with flamingo and hedgehog figures between letters by Carroll added a visually enticing dimension to the exhibition. This compelled children, parents, tourists and students alike to explore the British Library’s narrative of *Alice in Wonderland*’s versatility in adapting to changing times and contexts, its creatively inspiring influence on popular culture and transformation over the past 150 years, thus ultimately affirming *Alice*’s ongoing global and international appeal. In pairing the wonder of encountering a set of intricately designed playing cards, figures and unusually sized cardboard objects – artfully scattered across an eminent library’s entrance hall – with a traditional showcase of manuscripts and illustrations, the British Library achieved an *Alice in Wonderland Exhibition* that offers ample aesthetic as well as academic avenues of exploration, befitting to bring the celebration of 150 years of *Alice* to a range of audiences.

Melissa Schuh

Šesta godišnja skupština Hrvatske udruge istraživača dječje književnosti Zagreb, 13. svibnja 2016.

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Šesta godišnja skupština Hrvatske udruge istraživača dječje književnosti održana je 13. svibnja 2016. godine na Učiteljskome fakultetu u Zagrebu, a ona je ujedno bila i druga izborna skupština nakon osnutka 2010. godine. Tajnim je glasovanjem za predsjednika ponovno izabran Berislav Majhut, za članove Upravnoga odbora izabrani su Smiljana Narančić Kovač, Tihomir Engler, Andrijana Kos-Lajtman i Štefka Batinić, a u Nadzorni odbor izabrane su Dubravka Težak, Diana Zalar i Dragica Dragun. Sanja Lovrić Kralj nastavlja obnašati dužnost tajnice.

Kratko izvješće o radu Udruge prethodne godine obilježilo je objavljivanje 4. godišta časopisa *Libri & Liberi*, koji je ulaskom u relevantne baze i ostvarenjem svih ostalih uvjeta