

First edition of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

Rare Children's Books Collection RAREJ 823.8 C23A (1866)

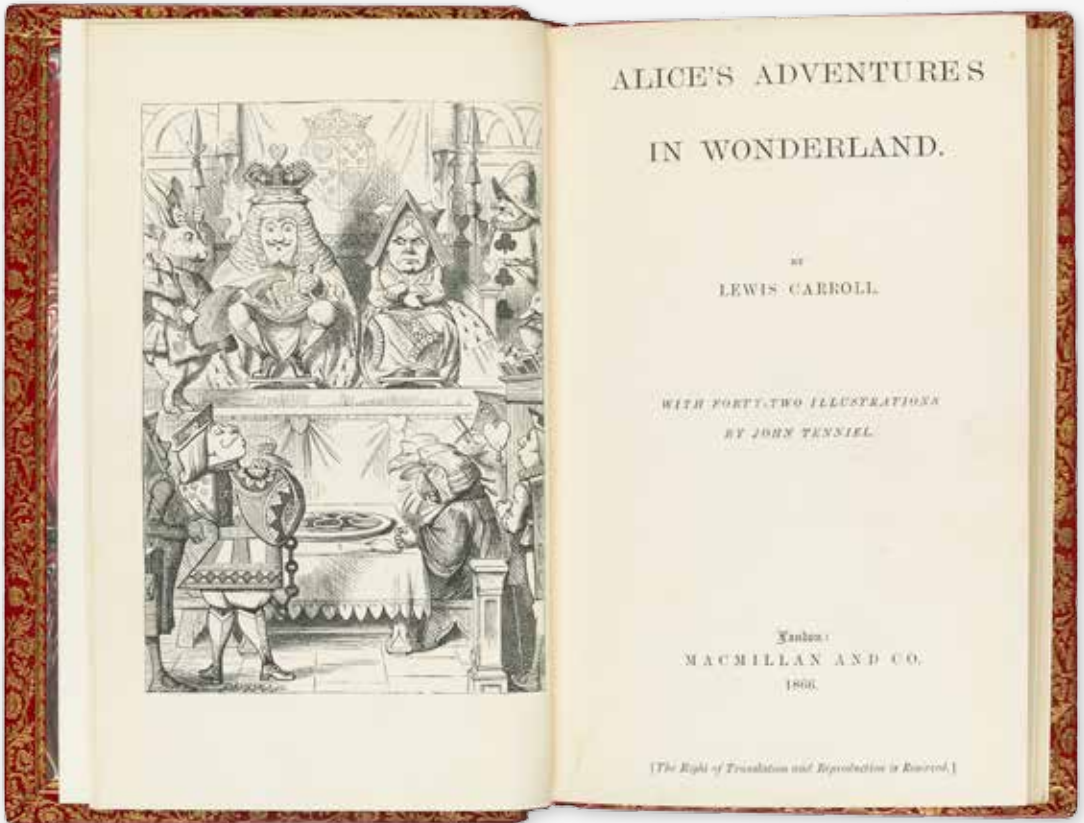
Acquired 2015

In celebration of the 150th anniversary of the publication of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the Library acquired a rare first edition through the 2015 Library Foundation Appeal. A fantasy full of puns and incongruous events and characters, in a setting where nothing is as it seems might appear an unusual creative endeavour for a 19th-century mathematician, but Charles Lutwidge Dodgson's *Alice* books were a pivotal development in children's literature, bringing fantasy and irreverent humour to new levels.

Dodgson (1832–98) was a natural storyteller with a wry sense of humour, who wrote for children under the pseudonym Lewis Carroll. His text for *Alice* was complemented with illustrations by political cartoonist and artist John Tenniel (1820–1914), to produce the seminal children's book that continues to spawn new versions. The events of 1865 that led to the publication of the first edition of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* reveal much about the exacting natures of both creators.

Tenniel felt that the reproduction of his illustrations in the first copies printed at Clarendon Press were of inferior quality. Dodgson agreed, suppressed the edition of 2000 copies and recalled the few prepublication copies sent to friends; only 23 of these early copies still exist, mostly being held in institutions. Tenniel's illustrations had been made on paper and required careful preparation to achieve quality printing. The Brothers Dalziel, one of the most skilled engraving firms of the Victorian era, subsequently made woodblock engravings of Tenniel's drawings. These became the masters for the electrotypes used in the authorised Macmillan first edition. Both Tenniel and Dodgson were satisfied with the quality of the new reproductions and publication proceeded. Though dated 1866, the Macmillan first edition acquired by the State Library was actually available by November 1865, in time for the Christmas market. The entire Macmillan first-edition run of 4000 copies sold out immediately.

Expiry of the British copyright early in the 20th century saw many artists, inspired by Carroll's words and Tenniel's illustrations, produce their own interpretations of *Alice*; more than 170 translations have been made, as well as many adaptations and parodies. The Library can boast of having followed the King's advice to the White Rabbit in the chapter 'Alice's Evidence': 'Begin at the beginning ... and go on till you come to the end',¹ though we hope versions of *Alice* are endless.



Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, illustrated by John Tenniel, London: Macmillan, 1866. Rare Children's Books Collection, RAREJ 823.8 C23A (1866)