Pop-up books become newest FAU library collection


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By Scott Travis, Sun Sentinel
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A college library might not be the first place you’d look to find colorful pop-up books of Charlie Brown, Darth Vader and the X-Men. But Florida Atlantic University’s Wimberly Library has become a showroom for these colorful, movable, three-dimensional creations.

The university’s Arthur Jaffe Center for Book Arts has received a collection of about 650 pop-up titles during the past year, including some of the most popular and unusual books ever produced.

Many are on display on three floors of the library through August 12, while the rest are housed inside the Jaffe Center on the library’s third floor. The center specializes in hand-crafted books as well as books that double as artwork, so pop-up books are a good fit, center director John Cutrone said.

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One of the most popular items in the collection is “Star Wars: A Pop-Up Guide to the Galaxy,” a best-seller in which Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker hold light sabers that actually illuminate. There are many children’s classics, including “Alice in Wonderland,” “Moby Dick,” “Peter Pan” and “The Wizard of Oz.” There are also some rare works as well, including a 1933 pop-up edition of “Pinochio.”

“For many people, pop-up books are the first kind of books that inspire them to think about books,” Cutrone said. “These books are just plain fun, and fun is a great motivator to learning.”

But pop-up books aren’t just for kids. The FAU collection features every genre found in regular books, including history, cooking, celebrity, geography, religion, health and art.

There are 10 books in the collection by David Carter, whose “600 Black Spots” and other works use random shapes and colors to create pages that look like 3D works of abstract art. “Mennonite Pop” by Kathy Kelly has pop-up images that humorously explain menopause. “In The Pop-Up Book of Photos,” giant spiders and tall buildings pop out to help people overcome fears.

And one that’s definitely for adults only: “The Pop-Up Book of Sex,” which illustrates couples in a variety of intimate positions. It’s not in one of the display cases, but it is available for private viewing.

“We don’t tend to shy away from controversial subjects,” Cutrone said.

Arthur Williams, a retired film editor who lives in Fort Lauderdale, donated the books to the library. He also collects ceramics, sculptures and photos, but has a special passion for pop-up books. He’s been collecting them since the mid-1970s.

“I could not stop looking at the pop-up books. Just to be able to manipulate them was an experience,” Williams said.

“To me, it is the engineering of the books that is so exciting.”

One downside to pop-up books is that they can be easily damaged, so they are being kept in glass cases during the exhibition, so only a couple of pages of the books are visible. But people can make an appointment with the Jaffe Center if they want to view entire books.

There are also workshops planned this summer on the art of pop-up books. For more information on the books or the workshops, contact John Cutrone at 561-297-0455 or jcutrone@fau.edu.

You can expect the collection to keep growing, as Williams finds more books he likes.

“She’s visited us those times in the last month and a half,” Cutrone said. “And every time, he has more books with him.”

stravis@tribune.com or 561-243-8637 or 954-425-1421

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