

**Peter and Ana Lowens University of Victoria Libraries Special Collections Student Fellow
Project Proposal by Kalea Raposo, Faculty of Humanities**

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Crafting Civilizations: Girls and Ancient Civilizations in 19th-century British Print Culture

I propose to study the connections between crafting and ancient civilizations in late 19th-century girls' print material from UVic's Special Collections. I will focus on the magazines *Atalanta* (1887-97), *The Girls' Own Paper* (1880-1907), and *Cassell's Family Magazine* (1874-97), where references to ancient civilizations (including those of Egypt, India, and China) occur throughout girls' craft tutorials, advice columns, and art history lessons. These representations contrast exotic and often dangerous images of ancient civilizations found in popular Victorian media with domestic, 'feminine' experiences of girlhood. Such representations suggest how the periodical press familiarizes girls with ancient civilizations through their everyday pursuits, placing girls' culture in conversation with other textual examples of Victorians' colonial obsession with ancient cultures (such as Egyptian culture in Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* [1897] and Indian culture in Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* [1868]).

Two brief examples suggest how 19th-century girls' print culture incorporates connections between craft practices and ancient civilizations: *Atalanta* borrows Egyptian visual motifs in its "Brown Owl" advice segments, and arts-and-crafts images from ancient cultures in *The Girls' Own Paper* can be easily scrapbooked. My project will range beyond these two key girls' magazines, extending to family magazines such as *Cassell's Family Magazine* and 19th-century girls' ephemera. Incorporating girls' work from Ella and Lillian Kidman's autograph scrapbooks and Katharine Maltwood's sketchbook into my project will provide insight from Victorian girls' lived experiences.

I hope to create a digital exhibit using Omeka (to be hosted on the UVic Libraries website), showcasing the involvement of girls' culture in 19th-century popular print trends, and making this research accessible to general readers. The exhibit would display scanned magazine content, including 19th-century craft instructions for girl readers—instructions that I would use to re-create samples of these crafts. This exhibit would thus not only include images from periodicals and information that contextualizes the experiences and activities of female children in the wider Victorian print craze about ancient cultures; it would also include photographs of reproductions of these crafts made by me.

As a research assistant for the Crafting Communities project, I engaged with Victorian material culture by researching 19th-century crafts (such as rag rugs and moving panoramas) and reproducing samples of these crafts for the project's website. This experience taught me how hands-on learning can benefit students and scholars and provided a useful model for how I might research and reproduce crafts related to ancient civilizations in the 19th-century press for my proposed exhibit.

This library fellowship would enable me to build on my earlier Special Collections research on novelists Ella Hepworth Dixon and Bessie Marchant as well as late-Victorian girls' magazine culture. I was fascinated to learn about the workshops offered by the Lowens fellowship, and I would love to continue my primary source research with their guidance. I am also passionate about creating open access educational resources, and this project would allow me to create an accessible resource for others interested in 19th-century girls' culture.