Whenever I talk about the Public Domain (which is all the time), I often get questions about children’s books from the Public Domain and whether they’ll sell. So I decided to take a serious look into Children’s Books to see what I could discover about them. In this article, I will:

- Show you the results of my market research
- Provide the best sources online for finding Children’s Books and related items
- Offer suggestions for products that you may not have thought about before now

Let’s get started.

When researching Children’s Books, it’s really easy to get locked into a certain way of thinking about them…as you remember them from your youth…or simply as “books for kids.” But when I think about Children’s Books, my thought process extends MUCH further and consider the children’s niche from a lot of different perspectives. To research effectively, I like to begin with the end in mind, so I consider things like:

- Who is my target audience?
- What potential product ideas could be based on Children’s Books?
Are there sub-niches within the Children’s Books niche that would be best to target?

What are the best ways to sell these products? Dedicated website, eBay.com, Amazon.com, traditional bookstores, etc.?

On the pages that follow, we will take a look at each of these points and determine whether children’s books are indeed a waste of time or an absolute goldmine.

**Who Is Your Target Audience?**

You have to understand your target audience: Who they are, do they spend money, how do they spend it, what kinds of products they prefer, etc. In this case, our target audience is pretty straight-forward…Moms, Grandmothers, Aunts, and perhaps, some Dads. The “Nostalgia” factor also comes into play with this broad niche as well. There are many who love to reflect on the “good ole’ days.” Even as I researched this niche and re-discovered some of the old children’s classics, I found myself remembering back to the days when I was a little guy playing in my Great-Grandmother’s living room…ah yes…great times.

A key factor to consider when selling to this target audience is their motivation behind buying your product. If you go into this market thinking, “Everyone loves Children’s books, so I should do great,” and then try to peddle your e-book collection on E-bay, you’re most likely going to fail. We will talk more about the best delivery methods for products a little later, but the point I want to make here is that understanding the customer’s motivation for buying is key. If they are looking for books to read to their children at bedtime, they are NOT going to buy...
your e-books in most cases. There will always be a few customers who might bite on your offer, but in most cases, with this market, e-book sales of the Children’s Classics (Secret Garden, Little Women, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, etc.) are going to fall flat. And the reason is simple—they want a physical book to read from when sitting at Johnny’s bedside, not a computer. Having said that, there is one possible exception to this rule, and we’ll get to that in a little bit.

Children’s Books are very unique in many respects because they appeal to many different types and ages of people, and so, understanding the related sub-niches is vital to your success as a vendor. You have the obvious niches, like fiction and non-fiction, picture and story books, and activity books, but you also have ALL those niche types separated into smaller categories AND into individual age groups as well! Amazon defines these age categories as:

- Baby – Age 3
- Early Readers, Ages 4 – 8
- Middle Readers, Ages 9 – 12
- Teens, Ages 13 – 19

Within each of the age categories, there are even MORE sub-niches, such as:

- Sports (baseball, football, horseback riding, etc)
- Science and Nature (weather, rocks, astronomy, etc.)
- Animals (bears, pets, penguins, etc.)
- Fantasy (wizards, magic, fairies, dragons, etc.)
- Educational (counting, colors, object identification, etc.)
- History (famous people, famous events, time periods, cultures, etc.)
- Arts and Music (sing-a-longs, activities, crafts, coloring, etc.)
- And More!
So you get a feel for the scope of what this broad Children’s niche includes, but also the possibilities it holds.

**Product Ideas from Public Domain Children’s Books**

I’ve already stated that e-books based on the Children’s Classics is NOT the best approach for selling to the Children’s market, but as I mentioned, there are a few exceptions to that rule, as well as some other product development options that may do well for you. Here are some ideas to get you started in no particular order.

1. **Printed Books.** There are some advantages and disadvantages to producing printed books. You certainly can appeal to the “read to my children” crowd, but you’re also competing with a huge market with a lot of turnover and marketing power. Still, that isn’t to say you shouldn’t consider this approach, but you’ll want to make sure the demand will be there for the books you want to reproduce. The key here is to find things that are unique or one-of-a-kind. I can’t tell you what those might be, but there are millions of children’s books in the Public Domain, and some research on your part should turn up goodies. Niches to focus on the most could include the following: Christmas, Activities, Games, Other Holidays, Seasons, Dolls, Crafts, Scrapbooking, Keepsakes, Animals, etc.

   Of course, if you decide to go the printed book route, you’re going to need someone to print them. There are a few options for you, like cafepress.com,
blurb.com or mpix.com, but the one I would recommend the most would have to be CreateSpace.com. CreateSpace makes creating printed books about as simple as you can get. They have an excellent help section to answer questions and how-to wizards to walk you through the process. Their prices are competitive and, since they’re owned by Amazon, your books are almost immediately available for sale on Amazon’s site, which is huge! They also offer a LOT of options and choices for printing, bindings and sizes. Oh, and here’s the cool part…it’s free to get started. You ONLY have to pay for the books you order. It costs nothing to create and upload them! Very cool!

2. CD & DVD Collections. Collections are one of the exceptions I mentioned earlier when talking about Children’s Classics. Collections are simply what the title states: Collections of books, usually on CD or DVD and usually grouped together by theme, culture, religion, activity, etc. You would typically sell these collections on Ebay or through your own website, with an eye toward selling to parents, especially Homeschooling parents. Homeschool parents often view education and reading differently than non-Homeschool parents because they are usually more actively involved with their child’s education process. Another market segment that may purchase Collections would be educators, for the same reasons. Except for the occasional avid reader that comes across your offer, chances are likely that MOST of your sales will come from these two groups of people.

As with the printed books, I would recommend looking toward using the same niches, which, as mentioned earlier, include: Christmas, Activities, Games, Other Holidays, Seasons, Dolls, Crafts, Scrapbooking, Keepsakes, Friends, Animals,
One caution with Collections: I would NOT consider offering collections as digital downloads, especially on Ebay. There are too many people trying to sell the same collections of thousands of e-books for just a few bucks or less. It’s a shame that people have to cheapen the value of great books using stupid tactics like that, but that’s the way it is.

3. Kindle E-Books. The second exception to the e-book rule I mentioned earlier is selling e-books formatted for Amazon’s digital reading device, Kindle. This market has some serious potential for Public Domain books, but you’ll need to hurry. A few people have discovered the opportunity and benefit of uploading Public Domain books for Kindle, including Amazon! Of course, given the fact that there are over 85 million books in the Public Domain, there is definitely still opportunity available for this strategy.

At the time of this writing, I was somewhat surprised to discover that, in the “Children’s Chapter Books” category and “Baby to 3” sub-category, six of the Top Ten books listed are from the Public Domain (Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, The Tale of Peter Rabbit, The Wizard of Oz, and others)! While I’m not going to go into the details here on how to prepare and upload Public Domain books for sale on Kindle, Amazon does offer instructional guides on how to do it. I’ve spent some time going through the material and it’s pretty straightforward. Currently, Amazon pays a commission of 35% on retail for all Kindle e-book sales.

4. Video Books. Video books offer some excellent opportunities for product creation because almost no one is doing it. Here’s the strategy: Take your Public Domain children’s picture book and scan the pictures. Then, create a PowerPoint presentation that includes every illustration from the book. Record
yourself (or someone else) reading the book, or hire voice talent to read it for you. Once the audio recording has been completed, synchronize the audio to the illustrated Powerpoint presentation. Once every component of the Powerpoint presentation is functioning to your liking, record the entire presentation using Camtasia and burn it to a DVD.

Depending on the length of the book(s) you record in this fashion, you may be able to include several books on one DVD, or create an entire series of DVD’s using this strategy. Preparing the DVD’s for sale is also a straight-forward process. I recommend using Kunaki (www.kunaki.com) for all your DVD creation needs. They are who I use and the process is very simple. The cost is also very reasonable—only $1.75 per DVD plus $3.00 per order.

5. Image Collections. I recently received the newest Veer.com catalog in the mail advertising the latest releases for typefaces and image collections, and a few of the “new” releases were silhouetted collections of old children’s illustrations taken mostly from books and postcards. Of course, I found this revelation very interesting since I was planning this report, and so I did some more investigating on the viability of selling children’s images from the Public Domain. Coupled with research that I had already done, I saw very quickly that there were some excellent opportunities available for creating some potentially great-selling products based on images. Of course, the appeal to graphic designers is huge, thanks in part to their ongoing need for lots of images during the course of their design activities. Scrapbooking is an especially important market to consider selling your images to as well, especially considering the industry is growing annually at double-digit rates.

These images can be delivered in a variety of ways, including:

- **CD or DVD.** These can be sold through a dedicated site or through eBay.
✓ **Dedicated Digital Downloads.** Sell through your own content management site. There are a number of free CMS (content management system) solutions out there for creating your own site to sell images.

✓ **Third-Party Digital Downloads.** Sell through micro-stock websites, like istockphoto.com, dreamstime.com and bigstockphoto.com (these are the three stock sites I use the most). Back when I was registering with these sites to sell photographs and images through them, I e-mailed each of them to find out their stance on Public Domain images. They each stated that they did accept images from the Public Domain as long as I had proof that they were copyright-free. No problem!

✓ **In Printed Form.** Printed images can hold special appeal to the scrapbooking market, as well as the craft market, but this would NOT be my first (or second) choice for a selling strategy of printed children’s illustrations. The best selling approach for selling children’s illustration images in printed form would have to be selling them as posters...hands-down. You can easily advertise the images on eBay as posters, and then print them out as the auctions are won using a large-format inkjet printer, such as the HP Designjet Z2100 Photo Printer Series or the Epson 7880 or 9880 Printers (there are many earlier versions that would also serve you as well).

6. **Other Physical Products.** Many of the children’s illustrations you’ll find in the Public Domain may be well-suited for other physical products as well. While this approach wouldn’t be my first choice as a product or marketing strategy, I still
believe it has a lot of potential, especially with the right image/product combinations. Here is a list of a few product creation websites:

**CafePress.com**
http://www.cafepress.com

**Zazzle.com**
http://www.zazzle.com

**Venus Puzzle**
http://www.venuspuzzle.com

**Get Etched**
http://www.getetched.com

**PrintFection.com**
http://www.printfection.com
Where to Find Children’s Books Online

Many of the websites that offer Public Domain books (like www.gutenberg.org and www.literature.org) include Children’s books. You will also find them on a site that I spend a lot of time on—Google Books (http://books.google.com). But there are a few sites I’ve found that are dedicated to children’s books, and I want to take a look at those here.

1. International Children’s Library (http://www.childrenslibrary.org)
The mission of the International Children’s Digital Library Foundation is to excite and inspire the world’s children to become members of the global community – children who understand the value of tolerance and respect for diverse cultures, languages and ideas – by making the best in children’s literature available online (excerpted from website). Not everything you'll find on this site is in the Public Domain, so you'll want to make sure you check the Publication Date displayed with each book.

2. Literature for Children (http://palmm.fcla.edu/juv/) Literature for Children is a collection of the treasures of children's literature published largely in the United States and Great Britain from before 1850 to beyond 1950. At the core of this Collection are books from the Baldwin Library of Historical Children's Literature, housed in
the Department of Special Collections and Area Studies at the University of Florida (*excerpted from website*). While this collection is not huge—974 titles—it does offer an excellent representation of vintage children’s books. Some books do not include the original covers and most are presented in JPG or PDF form, along with the ability to purchase copies directly from the website.

3. **Children’s Literature** from the Rare Book & Special Collections Reading Room
   ([http://www.read.gov/books/index.html#kids](http://www.read.gov/books/index.html#kids))
   This collection of children’s books features 50 classics of Children’s Literature from the archives of the Library of Congress. Each are offered as high-resolution PDFs. Bibliographic information is also included for each title in case you want to research additional titles by the same author or illustrator.

4. **Digitized Juvenile Literature**
   ([http://ufdc.ufl.edu/juv](http://ufdc.ufl.edu/juv))
   Drawn from collections in FSU Libraries Special Collections, the Digitized Juvenile Literature Collection contains over 2,500 scanned page images from 47 nineteenth-century children’s books. More texts are continuously being added to the collection (*excerpted from website*).
5. 19th-Century Girls' Series (http://www.readseries.com)
Long before Nancy Drew, the Hardy Boys, Sweet Valley High, the Babysitters' Club, or Magic Tree House, series books provided a source of enjoyable fiction for children. The first children's fiction series appeared in the United States in the 1830s, and by the 1860s the genre was well-established and earning both praise and censure (excerpted from website).

Here you'll find bits and pieces that have been collected or found interesting about nineteenth-century American children. You'll also find works selected from early children's books and magazines (taken from their website).

Additional Children’s Book Links:
http://www.munseys.com/detail mode/cat/20/Children
http://www.odl.state.ok.us/kids/century/century.htm
http://www.kells-craft.com/textcontents.html
Where to Find Children’s Books Offline

I’m not going to go into a lot of detail about finding books offline, because your options are pretty straightforward. Here are the best places to look:

**Used Book Stores.** The other day, I decided to see what Children’s books I could find at one of my local favorite bookstores—Twice Read Books and Comics. It took me just a few minutes to find quite a few excellent Children’s books that were in the Public Domain, including an amazing picture book, a book on model railroading, and some other goodies. Of course, they weren’t “free” like on the Internet. The prices ranged from $15 to $40 each, but heck, I’ve paid more than that for crappy marketing e-books. So I had a lot of fun finding these gems!

**Flea Markets / Antique Shops.** I decided to put this suggestion to the test as well for Children’s books, so I headed over to the Fayetteville Flea Market, four buildings full of antiques, books, and just about anything else you can think of. It took just a few minutes to strike gold with the books. I found several excellent Children’s books full of gorgeous illustrations.

**Book Shows and Sales.** There are regular book sales in every state in the United States as well as in many countries around the world. The best place to locate sales near you is through Book Sale Finder (www.booksalefinder.com). I check this website on a regular basis for book show in my area, like the one coming up in May that is offering 75,000 books. I went to this show last year and cleaned up! Plus,
I find them to be a lot of fun…waiting in line in anticipation…the mad rush when the doors open…fighting the crowds for the best books…ah yes…I can’t wait! You want to make sure you hit the sales that offer books that are not picked over. Usually, many if not all those books are donated. Also watch for library sales. They will often sell off their old books to make way for the new ones, and you can often pick up a few treasures for fifty cents or a buck!

**Other Options for Public Domain Children’s Resources**

I’ve spent most of this report talking about Children’s books, but I want to take a few moments to share some other types of Public Domain Children’s resources that can offer you some terrific alternative sources for your product creation materials.

**Magazines.** If you read my *Public Domain Magazine Secrets* e-book, part of Limitless Blog Content, ([http://limitlessblogcontent.com](http://limitlessblogcontent.com)) then you know that out of the over 200,000 magazine titles (with all their issues) that were published from 1923 to 1964, 99.4% of those never renewed their copyright. That means that a TON of those magazines are now in the Public Domain. Of course, a number those periodicals were geared toward children, or featured articles or stories about or for children. This is a huge, largely untapped source for a lot of great content for children’s projects. So you might want to keep it in mind when planning your Children’s projects. For more details on Public Domain magazines, be sure to check out my book!
Children’s Magazines in the Public Domain

American Child. Irregular 1919
American Girl. Monthly 1917
Boys’ Life for All Boys. Monthly 1911
Child. Monthly 1936
Child Development. Quarterly 1930
Child-Family Digest. Monthly 1949
Child Life. Monthly 1921
Child Study. Quarterly 1923
Child Welfare. Monthly 1922
Children’s Activities; For Home and School. Monthly 1934
Children’s Magazine. Quarterly 1947
Collins Magazine for Boys and Girls. Monthly 1948
Crippled Child. Bi-Monthly 1924
International Child Welfare Review. Irregular 1947
Journal of Child Psychiatry. Quarterly 1948
Journal of Exceptional Children. Monthly 1934
Junior Bookshelf. Quarterly 1936
Juvenile Merchandising. Monthly 1947
Kinder Journal; A Jewish Children’s Magazine. Monthly 1920
Leader. Bi-Monthly 1946
National Parent-Teacher. Monthly 1906
Nervous Child. Quarterly 1941
Parents. Monthly 1934
Parents’ Magazine. Monthly 1926
Quarterly Journal of Child Behavior. Quarterly 1949
Understanding the Child; A Magazine For Teachers. Quarterly 1931
World Youth. Monthly 1942
World’s Children. Monthly 1920
Young America; National News Weekly For Youth. Weekly 1928
**Postcards / Greeting Cards.** There are millions of postcards and greeting cards in the Public Domain and many of them feature children’s illustrations! I’m sure you’ve seen some of these around your local flea market. It honestly doesn’t take much effort to find postcards or greeting cards of this type, depending on the types of illustrations you are looking for. The early 1900’s were a heyday for postcards and the printers of the day did some really creative things with them, from fancy die-cutting to foil stamping and more! So if you’re thinking about working with Children’s illustrations in some form or another, do not overlook vintage postcards and greeting cards!

**Ephemera.** Ephemera is a cool-sounding word that usually refers to printed materials that were created for limited use. Types of ephemera you might consider using, especially as sources for Children’s illustrations, would include:
- Calendars
- Cereal Boxes
- Tobacco Cards
- Postage Stamps
- Product Labels
- Catalogs
- Coloring Books
- Paper Dolls
- Children’s Game Boxes
- Sheet Music Covers
- Playbills
- Other Similar Items
Discovering Public Domain Comics

I also discovered another really great site that features Public Domain works from another classic genre—comic books!

The Comic Book Plus site (http://comicbookplus.com) offers a huge selection of comics that are copyright-free or that are now in the Public Domain. Their offerings include comics from publishers such as Ace Comics, American Comics Group, Fox Feature Syndicate, Hillman Periodicals, MLJ Comics, Prize Comics Group and many others.

Downloading the comics requires a free membership (please note that the validation process can take a little while), and there are some imposed downloading restrictions, which, actually are not all that limiting. You can also download the pages individually without a membership!
Secret Tip: While looking through your downloaded comics, make sure you pay attention to the ads that are included within the comic. You’ll often find them on the inside front cover or inside back cover. Here’s why: There were often ads for books, products and other goodies presented within the comics…I’m sure you remember seeing them if you were a comic book reader. These ads can often lead you to OTHER Public Domain treasures just waiting to be found and cashed in on (like these body-building courses from the Jowett Institute of Physical Culture). Of course you have to locate the items advertised, AND you have to insure that they are indeed in the Public Domain. But as I always say, “You can’t find what you don’t know what to look for.”

The easiest way to create saleable products from Public Domain comics would be to offer the collections on CD or DVD, but I would challenge you NOT to do that. The task at hand for the Public Domain user is to create hybrid products that blend the success and creativity of the past with the imagination and technology of today. Ask yourself what NEW, creative product creation strategies can you use to bring these Public Domain works to life once again in a way that is both inventive and fun. The solution to that challenge may very well launch you on your way to a very profitable future.
Using Public Domain Content…
FOR AMAZING TOY CREATION

Did you ever have one of those moments of curiosity that leads you down a path to ideas you’ve never considered before? I love those times, and this mini-report is about one such curious revelation. My challenge to you in writing this report isn’t so much to go out and pursue the direction I’m writing about (making toys from Public Domain content), but rather to engage your imagination in a way that you’ve not considered before. And who knows, in seeing the Public Domain from yet another new perspective, you may just uncover the perfect match for your own business ventures!

The foundation for this report began with a series of completely unrelated events…my testing a new large-format printer I just purchased and re-discovering a toy figure of a Sioux Medicine Man I had purchased for my wife several months ago. Here’s how it began….

More than a year ago, I began downloading images from one of my favorite Public Domain image site: The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale (http://beinecke.library.yale.edu). I was looking for Native American images and came across some amazing paintings from the 1800’s by an artist named Karl Bodmer. I downloaded several of his paintings. Enter the new Epson Printer.

I purchased an Epson Stylus Photo R1800 printer a few weeks ago that is capable of printing on paper 13 inches in width. I wanted a good image to test drive the printer and remembered a particular Bodmer image that I really loved. I’ve included it on the next page for your reference. The print from the R1800 reproduced in incredible detail and we’re in the process of having the print matted and framed.
Okay…fast-forward to a few days ago. I was in our bedroom getting ready for work when I spied the figure I mentioned earlier. It was a cool Indian dude I picked up at Target…definitely an impulse buy, but I thought my wife would enjoy it, and she did. I walked over and picked up the figure and when I did, I suddenly
reminded the print I had just made several days prior. And that’s when I began to think about the similarities the figure had with the painting I had printed. Below is the figure. It’s manufactured by a company called Schleich. They manufacture all kinds of historically based figures and related items.

Upon comparing both the toy and the painting, I came to the same conclusion you probably are: With a few minor differences, the toy is absolutely based on the painting. And that’s when it hit me: “They’re using Public Domain content as the basis for their toy collection!” Absolutely brilliant!

Now you probably know me well enough by now to know that I can’t let something like this go without some serious research. I was curious as to whether I could find other examples of Public Domain images being turned into toys, and my discoveries prodded me to dig even deeper. You’re going to love what I discovered!

In addition to the wonderful figures that Schleich makes, I found another toy company that uses Public Domain content as the basis for toy creation as well: A company called Safari Toys. Again, they primarily focus on the education market. In the little bit of research I conducted, I noticed that the education market showed the most interest in producing many of these toys. But I also discovered some Public Domain-based toys that were created just for fun. We’ll get to those in just a minute. I’ve included one of my personal favorite toys produced by Safari on the next page along with its inspiration. As you see, you can’t get much more “Public Domain” than Horus from Ancient Egypt.
Safari also has a really cool line of samurai figures as well. To the left is one example of the figures they offer in this line. Personally, I think the educational toys are cool because they help children visualize, in a more three dimensional way, how characters from the past might have appeared. Plus, with having the toys to interact with, it can fire their imaginations in ways that I’m sure we’ve never thought of.

One last online company I found in my quest
for Public Domain-based toys (I'm sure there are many others) is my hands-down favorite. I'm definitely buying toys from these folks because they offer some very cool pieces you won't see anywhere else. The website is Archie McPhee (http://www.mcphee.com/) and they have a broad offering of toys—some of which are based on characters or people from Public Domain content. My personal favorite is Houdini. Even the packaging has that nifty retro feel to it.

McPhee also offers action figures of Einstein, Napoleon, Jesus, Edgar Allen Poe, and quite a few others. Like I said…definitely a fun place to shop!

As you can imagine, all these Public Domain-based toys got me excited and I found myself wanting to create my own toys. And so I started wondering if, in this day of “on-demand” everything, someone was actually offering customers the opportunity to create custom toys without having to purchase 10,000 units. I headed back into research and turned up some really excellent companies that will create custom toys for you. You're going to love this!
Custom Toys from the Public Domain

As I began to dig into actual characters from the Public Domain that could be used as the inspiration for custom toys, I realized that the opportunities are much larger than I originally anticipated. I found characters now in the Public Domain in children’s books, literature, historical figures, comic book characters, animals and more. To give you a taste of what I found, here is a subsection of a much larger list I am compiling of Public Domain characters that could be used for toys (or other creative products).

A
Airboy
Allan Quatermain
Aladdin
Ali Baba in Ali Baba and the 40 Thieves
Alice in Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland.
Amazing-Man, Zona Henderson, and Tommy Henderson Caliber Comics superheroes
American Crusader (Nedor superhero)
Ayesha

B
Bagheera in The Jungle Book.
Baloo in The Jungle Book.
Bert the Turtle from Duck and Cover
Billy Bounce (early newspaper strip character)
Big Bad Wolf in The Three Little Pigs, Little Red Riding Hood, and The Wolf and the Seven Young Kids.
Boy King (Hillman Periodicals character)
The Black Bat (pulp character)
Black Beauty
Black Owl (Prize Comics superhero)
Black Terror (Nedor superhero)
Blue Bolt
The Brain that Wouldn't Die

C
Captain Future (pulp character)
Captain Future (comics) (Nedor superhero)
Claude Frollo in The Hunchback of Notre Dame
Captain Hook in Peter Pan
Captain Nemo in 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea
The Cavalier, Nedor superhero
Cheshire Cat in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland
Commando Cody
Cinderella
Cthulhu from H. P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos

D
Doc Strange, Nedor superhero
Dorian Gray in The Picture of Dorian Gray by Oscar Wilde
Dorothy Gale in The Wonderful Wizard of Oz
Dracula
Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde

E
Ebeneezer Scrooge in A Christmas Carol
Esmeralda in The Hunchback of Notre Dame

F
Fantomah (Fletcher Hanks creation)
Fighting Yank, Nedor superhero
Four Comrades, Nedor superheroes
Flash Lightning and Lightning Girl (Ace Periodicals superheroes)
Dr. Frankenstein
Frankenstein's Monster (and also the version from Dick Briefer's Frankenstein comics)

G
Gertie the Dinosaur
The Gingerbread Man
Grim Reaper, Nedor superhero

H
Hansel and Gretel
Heidi
Huckleberry Finn

J
Jack in Jack and the Beanstalk
Jane Eyre
Jane Porter in Tarzan
Jim Hawkins in Treasure Island
John Carter of Mars
Judy of the Jungle, Nedor character

L
Liberator, Nedor superhero
The Little Mermaid
Little Red Riding Hood
Little Nemo
The Lone Warrior and his sidekick (Ace Periodicals superheroes)
Long John Silver in Treasure Island

M
Mad Hatter (from Alice in Wonderland
Magno and Davey (Ace Periodicals superheroes)
The March Sisters in Little Women
The Martians from War of the Worlds
The Mask, Nedor superhero
Miss Masque, Nedor superhero
Moby-Dick
Mowgli in The Jungle Book

O
Oliver Twist
The Oracle, Nedor superhero
Octobriana, Communist superhero

P
Peter Pan
Peter Rabbit
Pinocchio
Princess Pantha, Nedor character
Pyroman, Nedor superhero

Q
The Queen of Hearts in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

R
Robinson Crusoe
S
Sherlock Holmes
Spacehawk
Skyman
The Sphinx, Nedor character
Stardust the Super-Wizard (Fletcher Hanks creation)

V
Vulcan (Ace Periodicals superhero)

W
Woman in Red, Nedor Comics superhero
Wonder Man, Fox Publications superhero

Y
Yellow Kid

TOY MANUFACTURERS

If you’re going to make toys, then you’ll need manufacturers who specialize in creating them. Since everything else in product creation seems to be moving toward on-demand, I wondered if there were on-demand toy manufacturers as well. The short answer is a resounding YES!

Here is a list of the top custom toy manufacturing companies I discovered:

**Toy Builders**
http://www.toybuilders.com/
Toy Builders creates custom Toys, Action Figures, Digital Toys, Board Games & Plush Toys. From 1 toy to a million they can create anything you can imagine from a sketch, image, concept or 3D digital files. Prices depend on quantity, level of complexity, etc.

**Hero Builders**
http://www.herobuilders.com/custom/index.htm
Hero Builders offers custom 12-inch action figures, Pez Dispensers and other toys. For an idea or costs, plan on $425 for the setup and first non-talking, totally custom 12-inch figure and then $39.95 for each additional copy. They create custom head sculpts right from photographs you send. So if you find multiple images of a favorite childhood character that’s in the Public Domain, you could have your custom toys created just from those. And for those of you who love Public Domain comics and cartoon strips, there is a HUGE opportunity here waiting to be discovered.

**Binkley Custom Products**
http://www.custommadefigurines.com
These folks create custom Bobblehead figurines and Plush Toys, and the costs are actually really good, especially when you consider what they offer for the
money! I requested a quote on a Sitting Bull Bobblehead and the cost for 250 (their minimum) was $9.25 per unit; for 500 bobbleheads, the cost was just $5.25 per unit (definitely the way to go). So think about this…for just $2,625, you can get 500 custom-made 7-inch tall bobblehead figures of any character from the Public Domain. Amazing!

Next, I requested a quote for a 12-inch White Fang dog (from Jack London’s book by the same name…yes it’s in the Public Domain). The price for the White Fang dog was as follows: For 500 units (their minimum), the cost was $7.40 each; 750 units cost just $6.60 each. In both examples, higher quantities will drop the cost per unit prices even further. Very cool prices.

With the custom bobbleheads, figurines or plush toys (stuffed or beanie), a little creative thinking can take you far with the potential sales opportunities these offer. Take for example the market of fundraising: You could build an entire line of Public Domain-based toys that could be used by schools, sports teams (think old-time baseball players), church groups, etc. that could be used as fundraisers. Sell the toys for $25.00 each, with the group getting $10.00 of each sale. The remaining $15.00 goes to production costs ($5.25), leaving you with a net profit of around $10.00 per unit sold, and you’re not doing ANY of the selling! Of course there are other opportunities available here as well…marketing promotions for other companies, special incentive gifts for affiliates or employees, merchandise for gift shops, etc.

Here are some additional manufacturers of custom figurines and bobbleheads:
Bobble Factory – Bobbleheads
http://www.bobblefactory.com

Custom Bobble – Bobbleheads
http://www.custombobble.com

Head Bobble – Bobbleheads
http://headbobble.com

Whoopass Enterprises – Bobbleheads, Ornaments, Golf Products, Poker Products, Pet Bobbles
http://www.whoopassenterprises.com

Custom Plush Toys
http://www.customplushtoys.com

Custom Plush
http://www.customplush.com

Soft Stuff Creations
http://www.softstuffcreations.com
Custom Paper Toys

The last type of toys I want to talk about lends itself to Public Domain content really well, and those are the Papercraft Toys or Custom Paper Toys. I had no idea these types of toys still existed, or the market that existed for them, but Paper Toys are actually extremely popular. I found tons of blogs, Flickr Photostreams and many other websites devoted exclusively to custom paper toys. Here is one of my favorite characters that comes from the following site:

http://www.custompapertoys.com/

There are also a few other sites I want you to check out:

http://www.papertoys.com/
http://paperkraft.blogspot.com/

I didn’t discover any websites that specialize in creating custom paper toys for you per se, but in going through the websites listed above, I did come across quite a few artists who will create custom paper toys for you. Of course, you could also create your own if you feel artistically inclined to do so. The last website I included above also offers a step-by-step for the creation process of creating your own custom paper toys.
Paper Dolls

Of course, one of the most popular toys from the bygone era was paper dolls. Many of the vintage, now in the Public Domain paper dolls can still be found in flea markets and antique shops, on eBay and other similar venues. A few weeks back, I was at a local flea market and they had complete sets of original paper dolls from the early twenties available for sale. The price listed was around $20 for the lot. You could easily scan these and then offer them in digital form (download or on CD) or as print reproductions (printed out on your inkjet). Of course, you can create your own paper dolls as well from any character from the Public Domain.
In Conclusion

As I stated at the beginning of this report, my goal wasn’t necessarily to encourage you to head into the toy industry (unless you have a really cool idea that could sell and the market research is promising), but rather to challenge you to see the Public Domain from yet another perspective that you have probably never considered before now. The reason I find it important to share ideas like this with you is because I place a lot of value on the ability to see things differently…to be able to think outside the box, so to speak. I also enjoy sparking new ideas, new creativity, etc. for products that may be completely unrelated to where you are currently thinking. The end result may not be toys at all…but the process could connect ideas in new ways for you that open up a brand-new, highly profitable opportunity. I’m also out to drive the point home once again that the Public Domain is a MUCH larger playground than you or I have ever imagined! So I want to encourage you to go have some fun “playing!”