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Defining Popular Culture Within the Academic Library

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Defining Popular Culture Within the Academic Library

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Discussion Group

Staff involved with selection, processing, reference, acquisitions, cataloging

Goal is to have common understanding of what we have across our library system - pop culture collections do not reflect our organizational structure

Topics include:
- highlighting sub-collections
- who is collecting what
- potential exhibits, activities and other ways to highlight pop culture materials
- collaborations

Special issues and problems discussed:
- processing and description challenges for unique formats (for example: mini-comics, cataloging by character)
- international acquisitions challenges
- purchasing challenges (non-standard vendors, ephemeral formats, volume of materials)
- cataloging (reclassification of materials)

Materials from comic and graphic novel collections

What is popular culture?
A collection area? Area of study? Research tool?

At U-M, popular culture materials may be:

graphic novels
computer and video games
movies and television
popular news and magazine sources
popular fiction and non-fiction
music

in a variety of languages
from all over the world
online and print
used by researchers in all disciplines

diffuse
all subjects, formats, and locations
collected and processed by many people and in many different ways
require a holistic approach

The Jell-O Girl in Greece, no. 1. 1928 [Jell-O Recipe Brochures] From the Janice Bluestein Longone Culinary Archive

Poster image from unmade Robert Altman film, *Paint*. From the Screen Arts Mavericks and Makers collection.

Lessons Learned

Popular culture is not part of any single individual's job duties, therefore sustainability requires active time commitment on part of organizers

Increased awareness among library staff of academic interest and activity related to popular culture, along with our collections strengths, and library's capability to respond to these campus needs

Next Steps

Build capacity for outreach and publicity activities related to popular culture materials

Continue to work across the organizational structure to identify opportunities for collaborative collection development

Work directly with faculty to support their popular culture needs

Research Project

How useful are patron requests in building pop culture collections?

Research project is a mixed methods approach

ILL and purchase request monograph requests were collected

Pop culture materials are manually identified and tagged

Results will be analyzed and reviewed against current acquisitions practice

Faculty will be interviewed to supplement the data

Environmental Scan

Identifies relevant academic departments (5 primary, over 20 other programs)

Overview of faculty and courses related to pop culture

Sampling of course titles

Identifies relevant primary and secondary sources

Citizen Kane image from Screen Arts Mavericks and Makers collection
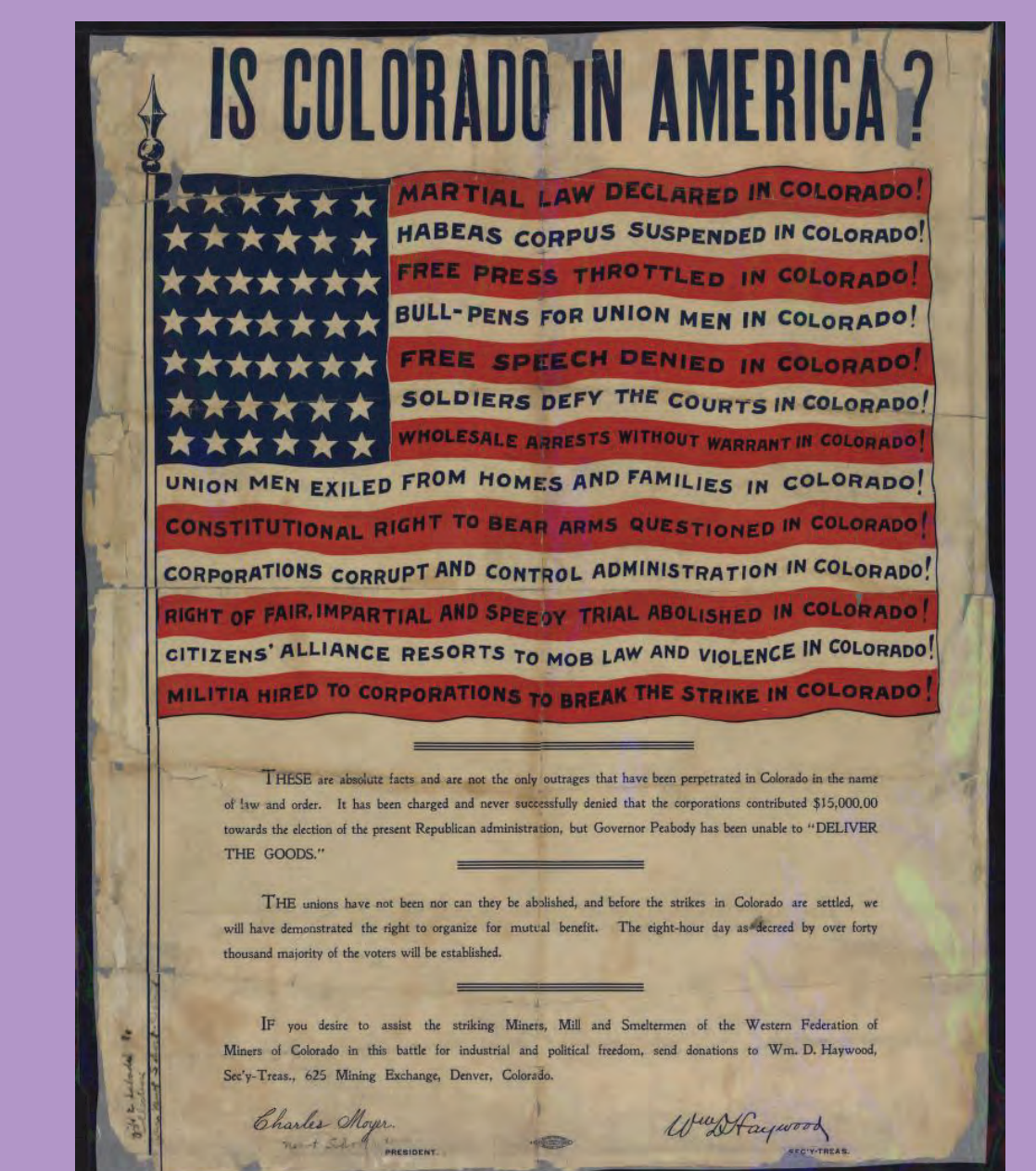
Purchasing Decisions

More holistic approach (many heads involved)

How to move and process items across collections (for example: magazines moved from shorter term collections to longer term)

Active focus on purchasing pop-focused content (for example: EBSCO pop magazine archive)

Committing more funds to enable large purchases

U-M Library Digital Collections. Political Posters, Labadie Collection, University of Michigan. Accessed: March 02, 2017.

Computer and Video Game Archive

Askwith Media Library

Joseph A. Labadie Collection

Janice Bluestein Longone Culinary Archive

Screen Arts Mavericks and Makers

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peer reviewed