Seduction of the Innocent

Bringing UMBC’s hidden comic book collection into the light

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• 6,000+ Comic books and graphic novels
• Books about comic book art and culture
• Original Art

The UMBC Comics Collection
• UMBC was founded in 1966
• The early Special Collections mission: collecting the uncollected
• Science Fiction
  • Pulp magazines
  • Novels
  • Fanzines
• With the science fiction came the comic books!

Why Comic Books?
The Hidden Collection
- Originally catalogued as individual books
• Wrong volume number
• No volume number
• Wrong issue number
• No issue number
• Nonsensical issue number
• Torn out splash page
• No cover
• Change of publisher

• Title change
• Issue number reset
• Volume number reset
• Variant covers
• Free hand-out issues
• Magazine vs. comic book
• Spinoffs
• Giant-Size collections

They Don’t Want to be Catalogued!
• Seeing the collection as a whole
• Adult view of children’s culture
• Definitely not just ephemera

It’s no archive, but...
• Understanding relevant cultural themes
• Finding passion
• Showing the relevance of popular culture

“You Must be in Love With Your Subject”
“And in Tune With Your Fellow Man”

- Listening
- Expand your own idea of what is exhibit-worthy
- Provoking a reluctant academic community
• Colleagues receptive to new ideas
• Staff willingness to trust students
• Engaging faculty

Shared Authority
• Outreach to the wider community
• Meeting the audience where they are
• Acknowledging rules as barriers

• FOOD.

Invitation
Putting on a show

- Teasing out a theme
- The Comics Code
- Doing the research
- Fredric Wertham, Senate hearings, modern reinterpretation
The Collection Revealed
The Collection Revealed
• Making use of Online Resources
• Plain old publicity
• Closing lecture

Spreading the Word
What's it all for?

- Increased foot traffic
- Better collaboration with faculty
- Raising the profile of Special Collections
Recommended Sources

- Comic Book Legal Defense Fund. www.cbldf.org
- Comics Vine. www.comicvine.com