

THE BILLY IRELAND CARTOON LIBRARY & MUSEUM *presents*

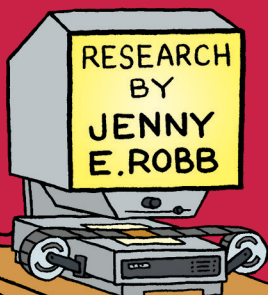
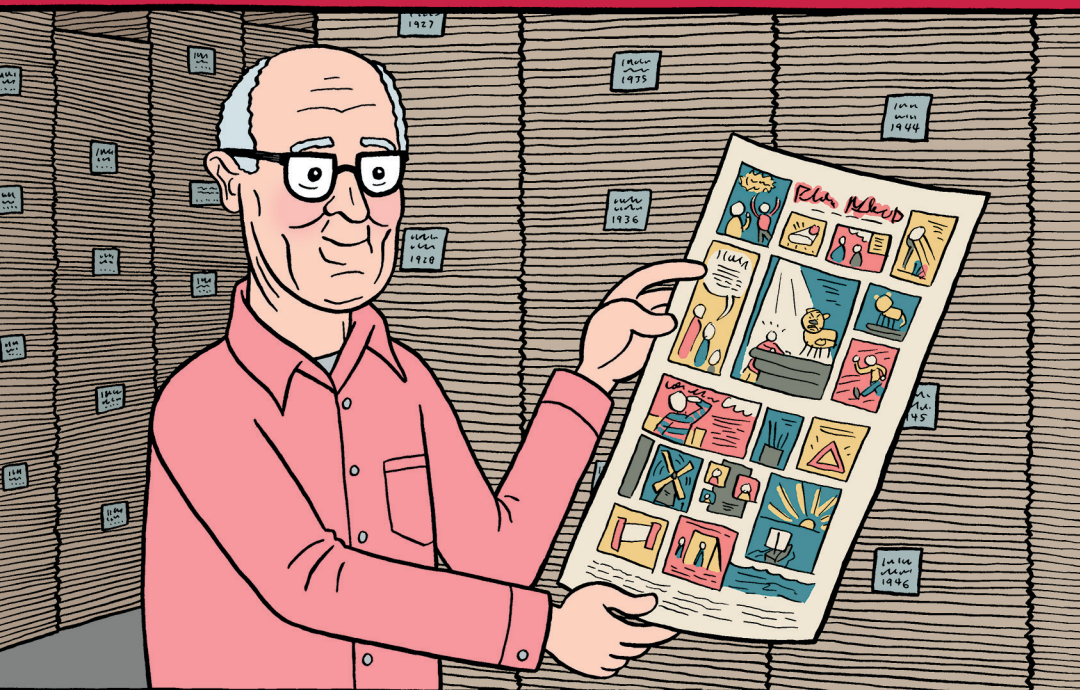


BILL



BLACKBEARD

THE COLLECTOR
WHO RESCUED THE COMICS



Jenny E. Robb

CURATOR & ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR



OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
LIBRARIES

IN 2009, ROBB
WROTE A 7,000-
WORD ACADEMIC
PAPER, WHICH
WAS PUBLISHED
IN **JOURNAL OF
AMERICAN CULTURE**.
2009, V32, N3,
PAGES 244-256.
ISSN: (PRINT 1542-
1731). (ONLINE 1542-
734X). DOI:10.1111/
j.1542-734X.2009.
00714.X AVAILABLE
ONLINE AT: [www3.
interscience.wiley.com](http://www3.interscience.wiley.com)

**BILL BLACKBEARD:
THE COLLECTOR
WHO RESCUED
THE COMICS**
JENNY E. ROBB



Alec Longstreth

DIRECTOR OF ACADEMIC OUTREACH



THE CENTER FOR
CARTOON STUDIES

IN 2016,
LONGSTRETH
RAN INTO OSU
LIBRARIAN
CAITLIN MCGURK
AT THE SMALL
PRESS EXPO.

YOU'VE NEVER
HEARD OF **BILL
BLACKBEARD?**!



AND SO... WHAT
AN **INCREDIBLE
STORY!!!**



I'LL SEND YOU A
PAPER MY BOSS
WROTE, WHICH GOES
MORE IN-DEPTH.



IN 2017,
LONGSTRETH
CAME TO OSU
FOR **CARTOON
CROSSROADS
COLUMBUS** AND
TO SEE THE
**BILLY IRELAND
CARTOON LIBRARY
AND MUSEUM**.

CAITLIN! AFTER
THE TOUR, I WAS
UP ALL NIGHT,
THUMBNAILING
JENNY'S PAPER
INTO A COMIC!



IT WOULD HELP
MORE PEOPLE
LEARN BLACKBEARD'S
INCREDIBLE STORY!



LET'S GO
PITCH
IT TO
JENNY!

I LOVE
THAT
IDEA!



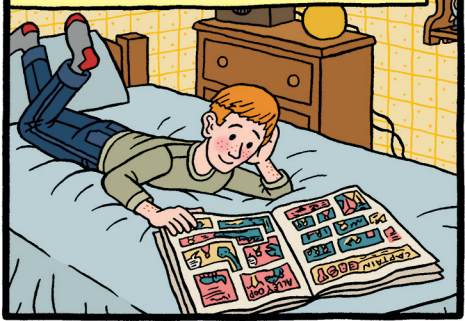
BILL BLACKBEARD: THE COLLECTOR WHO RESCUED THE COMICS

©2019 JENNY E. ROBB & ALEC LONGSTRETH. NO PART OF THIS
PUBLICATION (EXCEPT SINGLE PANELS FOR REVIEW PURPOSES)
MAY BE REPRODUCED WITHOUT THE WRITTEN PERMISSION OF
JENNY E. ROBB & ALEC LONGSTRETH.

BILL BLACKBEARD WAS BORN APRIL 28, 1926 IN LAWRENCE, INDIANA.



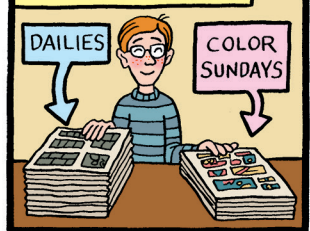
AT EIGHT OR NINE, BILL AND HIS MOM MOVED TO CALIFORNIA, WHERE THE HIGH POINT OF HIS WEEK WAS THE ARRIVAL OF THE SUNDAY COMICS.



AT SOME POINT IN HIS YOUTH, BILL DISCOVERED THAT MANY PEOPLE ACCUMULATED STACKS OF OLD NEWSPAPERS — SOMETIMES FOR SCRAP PAPER, OR JUST BECAUSE THEY NEVER GOT AROUND TO TOSSING THEM.



HE LATER REMINISCED, "ONCE I DISCOVERED THIS, I HAD NO OTHER INTEREST IN LIFE THAN FINDING THESE CACHES OF NEWSPAPERS." HE BEGAN COLLECTING COMIC STRIPS.



AFTER HIGH SCHOOL, BLACKBEARD JOINED THE ARMY AND SERVED IN EUROPE DURING WW II. UPON HIS HOMECOMING, HE ATTENDED FULLERTON COLLEGE AND BEGAN A CAREER AS A FREELANCE WRITER. IT WAS THEN HE DISCOVERED THE RUNS OF BOUND NEWSPAPERS THAT LIBRARIES HOUSED.



BLACKBEARD SPENT COUNTLESS HOURS READING THROUGH OLD COMICS AND BEGAN TO SEE THE NEED FOR A SCHOLARLY HISTORY OF THE NEWSPAPER COMIC STRIP.



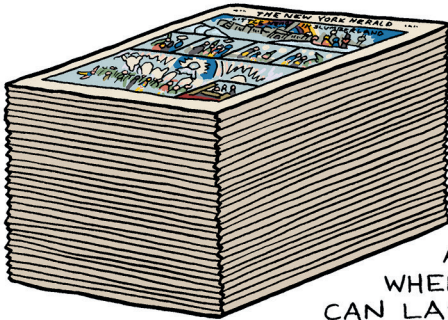
BUT BY THE MIDDLE OF THE 20TH CENTURY, LIBRARIES ALL OVER THE UNITED STATES WERE RUNNING OUT OF SPACE TO STORE THEIR BOUND NEWSPAPER ARCHIVES.



IN THE 1950s THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS BEGAN USING **MICROFILM** TO SOLVE THIS PROBLEM. ONCE THEIR LONG NEWSPAPER RUNS WERE MICROFILMED, THEY COULD TRANSFER, SELL OR **DESTROY** THE ORIGINAL PAPER VOLUMES. MANY PUBLIC AND UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES FOLLOWED THEIR LEAD.



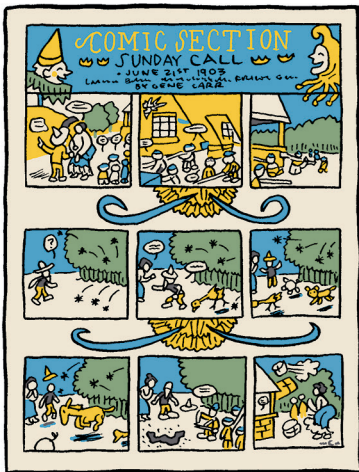
ANOTHER REASON LIBRARIANS TURNED TO MICROFILM WAS THE BELIEF THAT ALL NEWSPRINT WAS IN A STATE OF ONGOING DECAY, AND THAT MICROFILM WOULD BE MUCH MORE DURABLE.



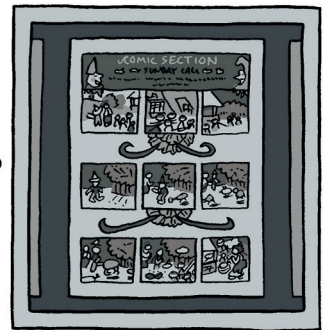
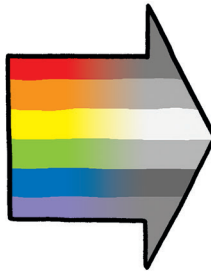
100+ YEARS OLD

DOING JUST FINE,
THANK YOU!

ALTHOUGH NOT STRICTLY ARCHIVAL,
WHEN PROPERLY STORED, NEWSPRINT
CAN LAST FOR MANY GENERATIONS.

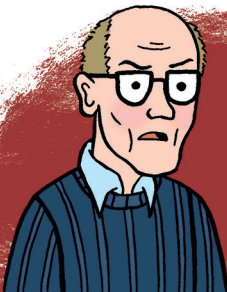


MICROFILM PRESENTS MATERIAL
ONLY IN BLACK AND WHITE, AND
AT A FRACTION OF THE
ORIGINAL SIZE.



MUCH OF THE INFORMATION IS LOST, **ESPECIALLY** ON
COLOR SUNDAY PAGES. THIS SEVERELY LIMITS A
SCHOLAR'S ABILITY TO STUDY THESE SOURCES.

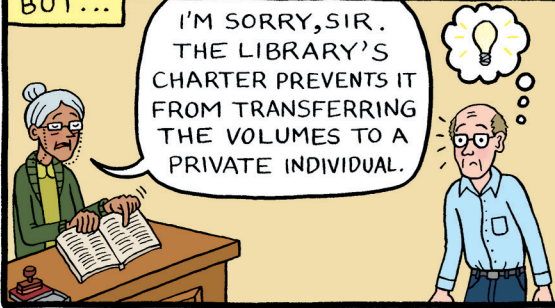
BLACKBEARD SAID OF LIBRARIES' PRACTICE OF
"REPLACING" NEWSPRINT:



MICROFILM IS
NOTHING LESS
THAN AN ARCHIVAL
DISASTER!

IN 1967 BLACKBEARD HEARD THAT THE SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY WAS PLANNING TO DISPOSE OF THEIR NEWSPAPER RUNS. HE OFFERED TO TAKE THE VOLUMES OFF THEIR HANDS, BUT...

I'M SORRY, SIR. THE LIBRARY'S CHARTER PREVENTS IT FROM TRANSFERRING THE VOLUMES TO A PRIVATE INDIVIDUAL.



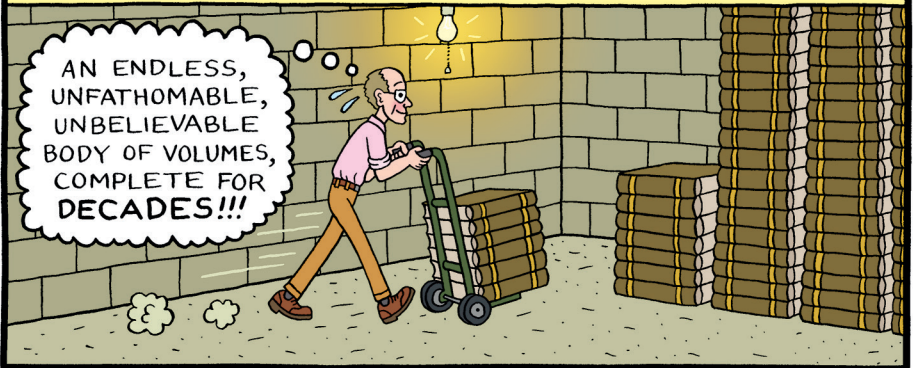
BLACKBEARD AND HIS WIFE BARBARA SOLD THEIR CAR AND MOST OF THEIR POSSESSIONS TO FORM A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION.

SAN FRANCISCO ACADEMY OF COMIC ART

*a non-profit association
for the study, collection,
and preservation of the
american comic strip.*

ACHIEVING NON-PROFIT STATUS PAVED THE WAY FOR THE SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY TO TRANSFER OWNERSHIP OF THE VOLUMES TO THE NEW ACADEMY.

AN ENDLESS, UNFATHOMABLE, UNBELIEVABLE BODY OF VOLUMES, COMPLETE FOR DECADES!!!



AIDED BY HIS WIFE AND VARIOUS FRIENDS, BLACKBEARD CONTINUED HIS QUEST TO RESCUE COMICS FROM LIBRARIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY.



BLACKBEARD EVEN RECEIVED SOME COLLECTIONS FROM THE NEWSPAPERS THEMSELVES! ALL OF THESE VOLUMES WERE HOUSED IN THE BLACKBEARDS' HOME IN THE SUNSET DISTRICT OF SAN FRANCISCO.



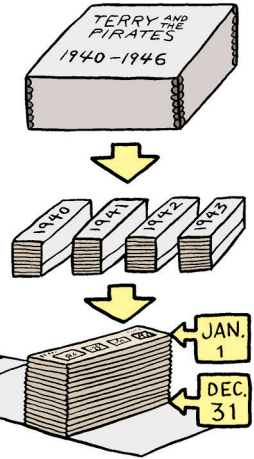
TO HELP WITH THE DAUNTING TASK OF ORGANIZING THE ACADEMY'S MASSIVE COLLECTION, BLACKBEARD DISTRIBUTED BROCHURES PROMISING "24-HOUR ACCESSIBILITY TO THIS MATERIAL."



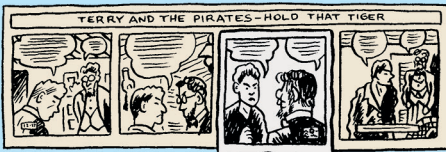
FOR THREE DECADES VOLUNTEERS HELPED BLACKBEARD ASSEMBLE COMPLETE CHRONOLOGICAL RUNS OF INDIVIDUAL COMIC STRIPS.



THIS WAS NOT AN EASY FEAT! THERE WAS NO INDEX OF WHICH PAPERS RAN WHICH STRIPS, AND THAT OFTEN CHANGED FROM DAY TO DAY AND MONTH TO MONTH.



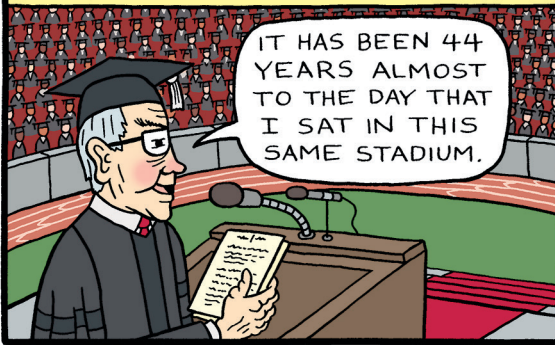
BLACKBEARD EVEN WENT SO FAR AS TO REPLACE INDIVIDUAL **PANELS**, IF HE FOUND A PRINTING DEFECT, TO ARCHIVE THE BEST POSSIBLE EXAMPLE OF EACH STRIP.



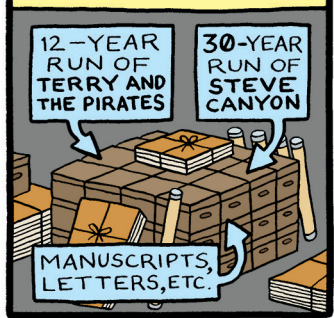
BLACKBEARD WENT ON TO EDIT OVER 100 BOOKS USING MATERIALS FROM THE ACADEMY, INCLUDING THE SEMINAL **SMITHSONIAN COLLECTION OF NEWSPAPER COMICS**.



MEANWHILE, ON JUNE 7TH 1974, CARTOONIST AND ALUMNUS **MILTON CANIFF** DELIVERED THE COMMENCEMENT SPEECH AT OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY.



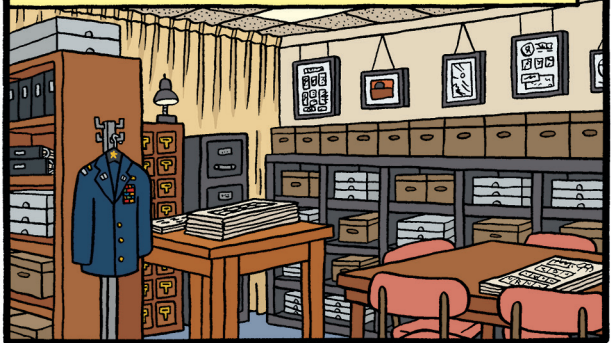
THREE YEARS LATER CANIFF DECIDED TO DONATE ALL OF HIS ARTWORK AND PAPERS TO HIS ALMA MATER.



THE TASK OF ORGANIZING AND CATALOGING THIS BODY OF WORK FELL TO OSU LIBRARIAN **LUCY SHELTON CASWELL**.



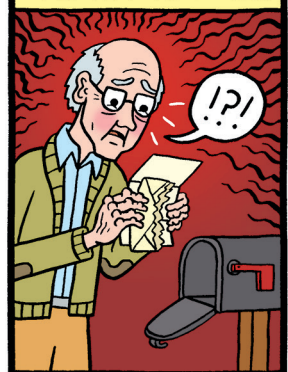
TWO CLASSROOMS IN THE JOURNALISM BUILDING WERE CONVERTED TO HOUSE THE COLLECTION, WHICH BECAME THE **MILTON CANIFF READING ROOM**.



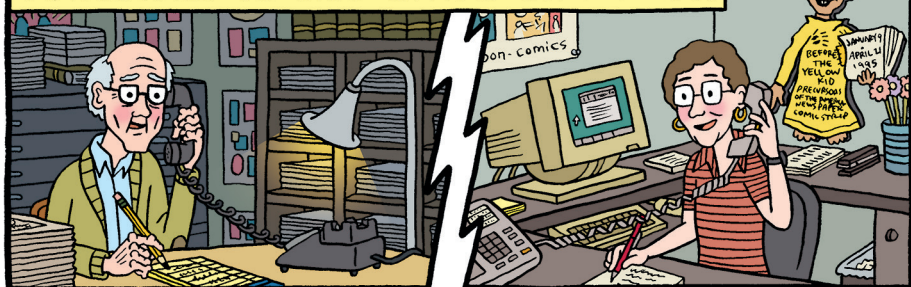
OTHER CARTOONISTS, COLLECTORS AND INSTITUTIONS DONATED THEIR WORK TO THE GROWING COLLECTION WHICH WAS RENAMED **THE CARTOON RESEARCH LIBRARY** IN 1989. IT WAS UTILIZED BY ACADEMICS, AUTHORS AND OSU STUDENTS.



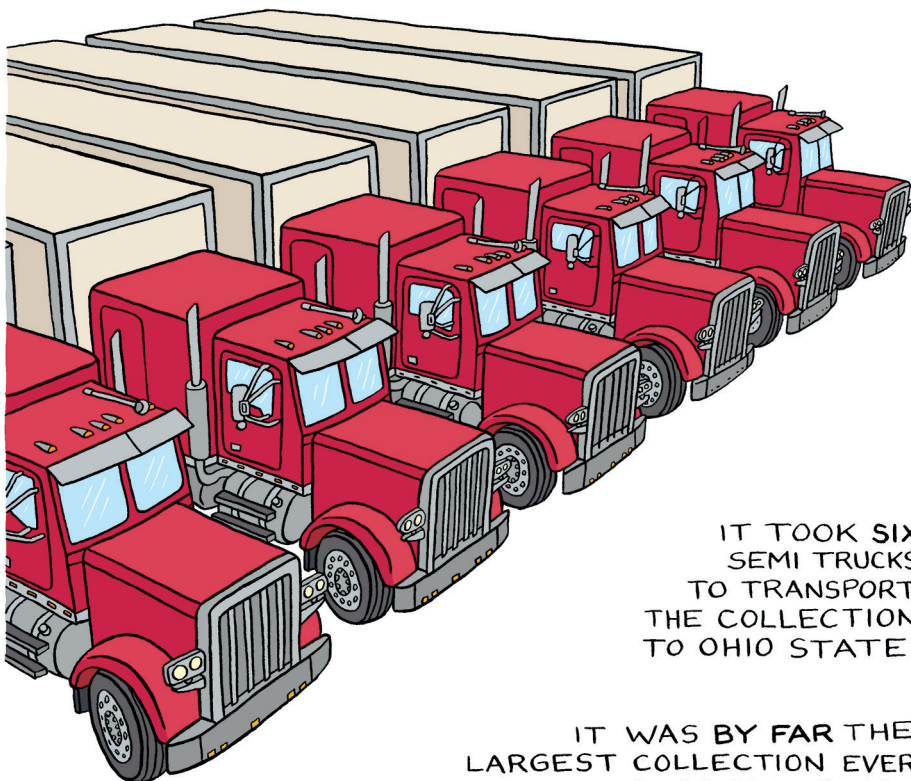
BUT THE LIBRARY'S **LARGEST** DONATION WAS YET TO COME...



IN 1997 BILL AND BARBARA BLACKBEARD LEARNED THAT THEIR HOME'S OWNERS WOULD NOT RENEW THEIR LEASE. REALIZING THAT THE ACADEMY'S COLLECTION WOULD HAVE TO BE MOVED, BLACKBEARD BEGAN NEGOTIATIONS WITH LUCY SHELTON CASWELL, TO TRANSFER THE MATERIALS TO OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY.



IN LATE DECEMBER 1997 A TEAM OF MOVERS PACKED UP **SEVENTY-FIVE TONS** OF PRINTED MATERIALS FROM THE BLACKBEARD'S HOME.




IT TOOK SIX
SEMI TRUCKS
TO TRANSPORT
THE COLLECTION
TO OHIO STATE.

IT WAS BY FAR THE
LARGEST COLLECTION EVER
ACQUIRED BY THE OSU LIBRARY.

BLACKBEARD, HIS WIFE, AND SFACA VOLUNTEERS HAD CLIPPED AND ORGANIZED AN ESTIMATED 2,500,000 DAILY COMIC STRIPS AND 350,000 SUNDAYS. HOWEVER, NO WRITTEN INVENTORY OF THE COLLECTION EXISTED.



THE GETTY FOUNDATION PROVIDED FUNDING FOR A TWO-YEAR PROJECT TO CATALOG THE COLLECTION, BEGINNING WITH THE OLDEST MATERIAL, AND TO CREATE AN ONLINE FINDING AID.

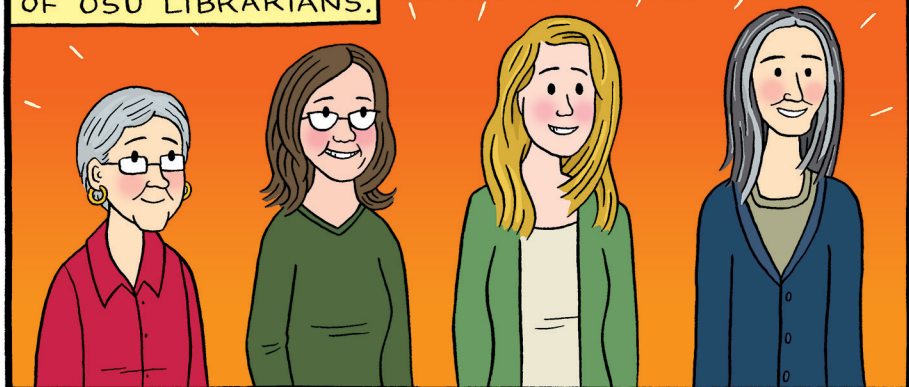
 Search...



TO DATE, LESS THAN HALF OF THE COLLECTION HAS BEEN FULLY CATALOGED DUE TO ITS ENORMOUS SIZE AND THE NEED TO INVENTORY EACH CLIPPING BY DATE.



IT IS A CATALOGING PROJECT THAT WILL REQUIRE THE HARD WORK AND DILLIGENCE OF GENERATIONS OF OSU LIBRARIANS.



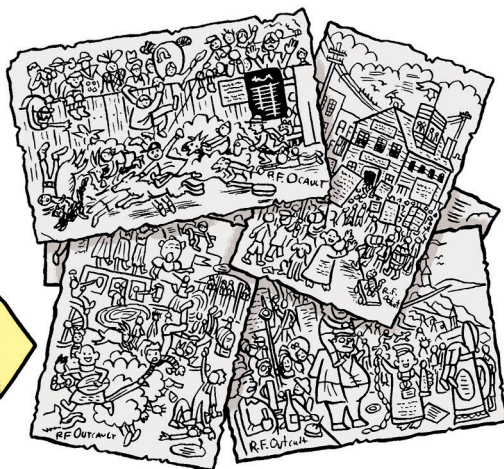
THE BLACKBEARDS MOVED TO SANTA CRUZ, CALIFORNIA WHERE BARBARA ENJOYED SURFING AND BILL CONTINUED TO PURSUE HIS INTERESTS.



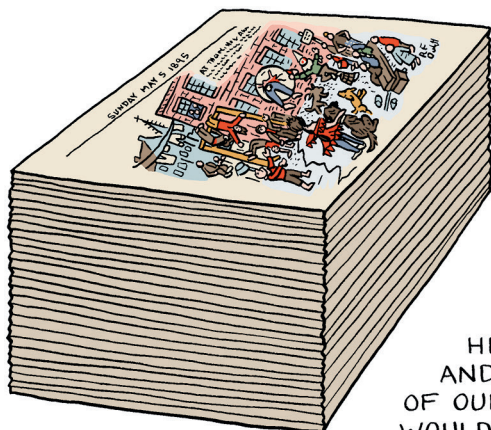
ON MARCH 10, 2011 BILL BLACKBEARD DIED, AGED 84.



MOST OTHER MAJOR COLLECTIONS OF COMICS FOCUS ON THE **ORIGINAL ART**, BUT NEWSPAPER SYNDICATES ROUTINELY DESTROYED THESE.



THERE ARE ONLY **SIX** KNOWN ORIGINALS LEFT OF R.F. OUTCAULT'S "YELLOW KID" SUNDAYS



BILL BLACKBEARD'S **COMPLETE** CHRONOLOGICAL RUN OF R.F. OUTCAULT'S "YELLOW KID" SUNDAYS



IN MANY CASES, BLACKBEARD'S CLIPPINGS AND TEAR SHEETS ARE THE **ONLY** RECORD THAT THESE WORKS EVER EXISTED.

HIS LIFE'S WORK RESCUED AND PRESERVED A VITAL PART OF OUR HERITAGE THAT OTHERWISE WOULD HAVE BEEN LOST FOREVER.

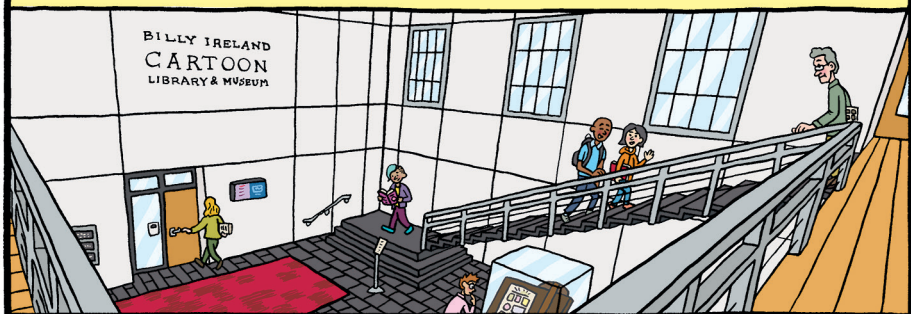


IN RECENT YEARS, STRIPS FROM BLACKBEARD'S COLLECTION HAVE BEEN USED BY SEVERAL PUBLISHERS TO HELP REPRINT COMPLETE, CHRONOLOGICAL RUNS OF A WIDE VARIETY OF COMIC STRIPS.

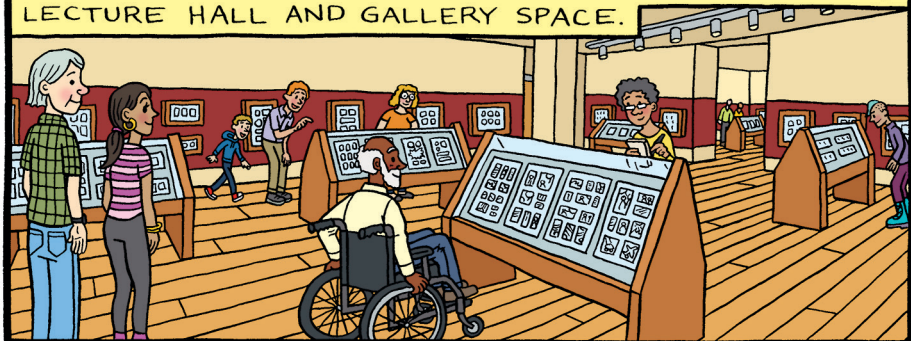
THESE VOLUMES HAVE GIVEN A SECOND LIFE TO THIS ERA OF CARTOONING, LEADING A NEW GENERATION OF READERS AND SCHOLARS TO ANALYZE AND APPRECIATE THESE COMICS.



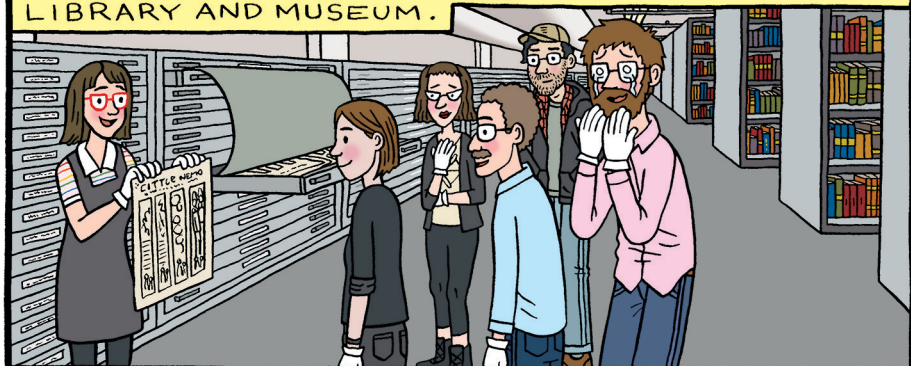
IN 2009 THE CARTOON RESEARCH LIBRARY WAS RENAMED THE **BILLY IRELAND CARTOON LIBRARY AND MUSEUM** IN RECOGNITION OF MILTON CANIFF'S MENTOR, WHO WAS THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH CARTOONIST FROM 1898 – 1935. A NEWLY-RENOVATED FACILITY OPENED IN 2013.



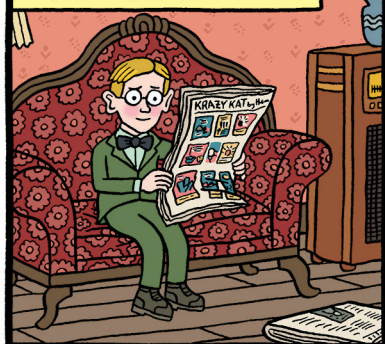
MORE THAN 300,000 ORIGINAL CARTOONS, 45,000 BOOKS, 67,000 SERIALS, 6,300 BOXES OF ARCHIVAL MATERIALS AND BLACKBEARD'S COLLECTION ARE NOW SAFELY ARCHIVED IN STATE-OF-THE-ART FACILITIES WITH A CLASSROOM, LECTURE HALL AND GALLERY SPACE.



ONCE A YEAR THE **CARTOON CROSSROADS COLUMBUS FESTIVAL** ATTRACTS HUNDREDS OF VISITORS AND CARTOONISTS TO THE BILLY IRELAND CARTOON LIBRARY AND MUSEUM.



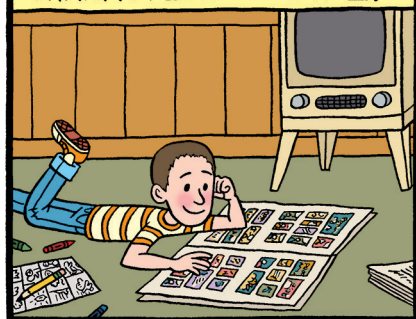
READING THE COMICS HAS BEEN AN AMERICAN PASTIME FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY.



COMIC STRIPS ARE ONE OF THE MOST **HUMAN** FORMS OF ART. STORIES ARE CRAFTED DAY BY DAY, WEEK BY WEEK, FOR YEARS OR SOMETIMES **DECADES**.



WE GET TO KNOW THE CHARACTERS, AND THROUGH THEM, THE CARTOONISTS WHO BROUGHT THOSE CHARACTERS TO LIFE.



FOR A FEW READERS, THE COMICS ARE **SO** FASCINATING THAT THEY ARE IMPELLED TO CREATE THEIR OWN.



EVEN IF THE GOAL NOW IS TO CREATE A WEBCOMIC, A MINICOMIC, OR A GRAPHIC NOVEL, STUDYING THE WORK OF PREVIOUS GENERATIONS OF CARTOONISTS IS INVALUABLE.



CONTEMPORARY CARTOONISTS ARE NOT CREATING COMICS IN A VACUUM. THEY ARE PART OF A LONG TRADITION WITH A RICH HISTORY!



THE END

Billy Ireland CARTOON Library & Museum

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

THE BILLY IRELAND CARTOON LIBRARY & MUSEUM

HOUSES
THE WORLD'S LARGEST
COLLECTION OF
MATERIALS RELATED
TO CARTOONS AND
COMICS, INCLUDING
ORIGINAL ART,
BOOKS, MAGAZINES,

JOURNALS, COMIC BOOKS, ARCHIVAL MATERIALS, AND
NEWSPAPER COMIC STRIP PAGES AND CLIPPINGS. OUR
PRIMARY MISSION IS TO DEVELOP THIS COMPREHENSIVE
RESEARCH COLLECTION OF AMERICAN PRINTED CARTOON ART,
TO ORGANIZE THE MATERIALS, AND TO
PROVIDE ACCESS TO THESE RESOURCES.

cartoons.osu.edu



CARTOON CROSSROADS COLUMBUS (CXC) IS A FREE, CITYWIDE ARTS
FESTIVAL HOSTED EVERY YEAR
BY PEOPLE AND PLACES WITH A
PASSION FOR CARTOON ARTS. CXC
PROVIDES AN INTERNATIONAL
SHOWCASE FOR THE BEST OF
CARTOON ART IN ALL ITS FORMS,
INCLUDING COMICS, ANIMATION,
EDITORIAL CARTOONS, NEWSPAPER
STRIPS, AND BEYOND, IN A CITY

THAT IS A GROWING CENTER OF IMPORTANCE TO COMICS
AND CARTOONING. CXC ALSO FOCUSES ON HELPING THE
NEXT GENERATION OF YOUNG CARTOONING TALENT
DEVELOP THRIVING CAREERS
THAT INVIGORATE THE INDUSTRY.

cartooncrossroadscolumbus.org



the
**CENTER for
CARTOON
STUDIES**

**THE CENTER FOR CARTOON
STUDIES (CCS)** OFFERS A
TWO-YEAR COURSE OF
STUDY THAT CENTERS
ON THE CREATION AND
DISSEMINATION OF COMICS,
GRAPHIC NOVELS AND
OTHER MANIFESTATIONS
OF THE VISUAL NARRATIVE.

EXPERIENCED AND INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED CARTOONISTS,
WRITERS, AND DESIGNERS TEACH CLASSES. CCS PROGRAMS
INCLUDE A TWO-YEAR MASTER OF FINE ARTS DEGREE, ONE-
AND TWO-YEAR CERTIFICATES IN CARTOONING, AND ANNUAL
SUMMER WORKSHOPS. THE SCHOOL IS LOCATED IN THE
HISTORIC DOWNTOWN VILLAGE
OF WHITE RIVER JUNCTION, VERMONT.

cartoonstudies.org

