

ADVENTURES IN GOVERNMENT COMICS

Discovering, Preserving, and
Promoting a Hidden Collection



“AND WHAT SHALL I DO WITH YOUR COMIC BOOKS, SIR?”
Ernest Maxwell, *Yank: The Army Weekly*, December 7, 1945

YOUR HOSTS FOR TODAY



**Bobby Griffith, Lead Government Information
Reference Associate, Sycamore Library**



**Tasha McClain, Government Information Librarian,
Sycamore Library**

Images created with ChatGPT

SYCAMORE LIBRARY

Government Information Connection at Sycamore Library, a branch library on the UNT campus

- A designated member of the Federal Depository Program since 1948
- Collections date from before the establishment of the U.S. government
- Unique print and online collections of government publications

[UNT Digital Library](#)

[Portal to Texas History](#)



UNT LIBRARIES AS PRESERVATION STEWARD

- Signed Memorandum of Agreement in February 2020.
- December 2022 comics added to UNT Digital Library.
- 2023 Digital Preservation Steward Addendum to MOA

GOVERNMENT COMICS COLLECTION

- Paper Comics — 260
- Online Comics — 64
- Comics in UNT Digital Library — 262

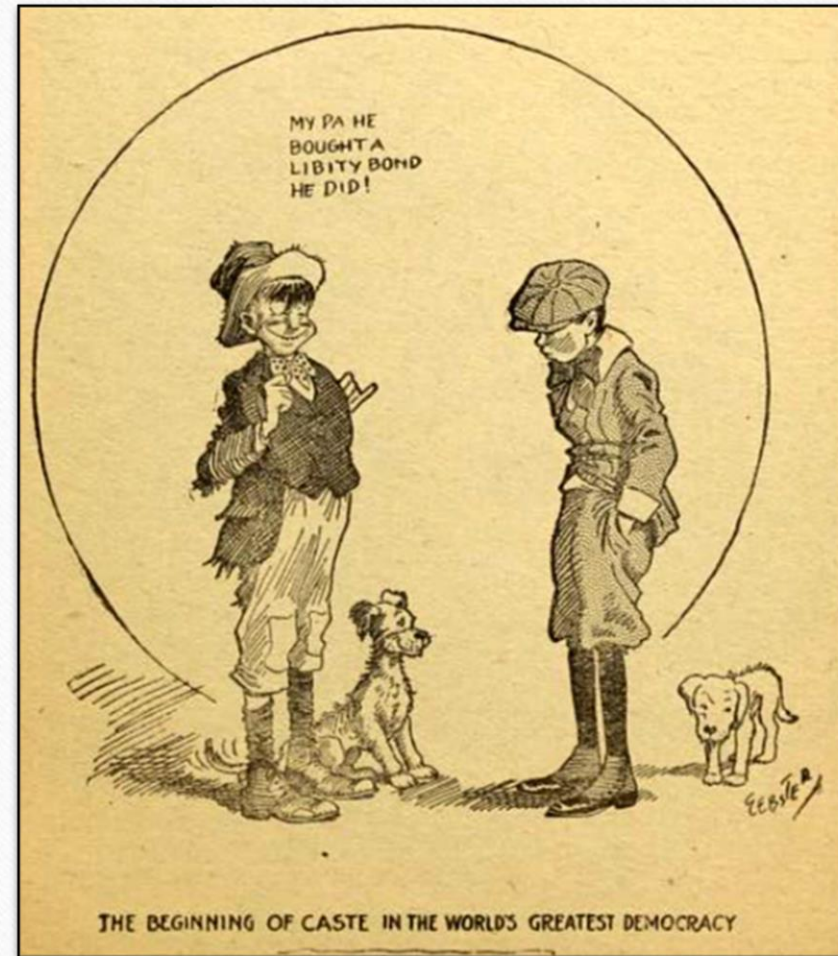
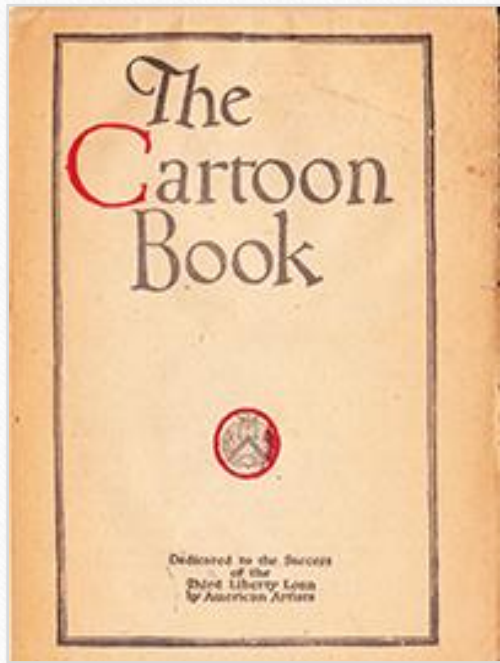




A HIDDEN TREASURE

- "I never knew the government made comics!"
- Valuable assets overlooked
- What's in your collection?

A SHORT HISTORY OF GOVERNMENT COMICS



"THE BEGINNING OF CASTE IN THE WORLD'S GREATEST DEMOCRACY"
H.T. Webster, *The Cartoon Book*, U.S. Bureau of Publicity, 1918

WHY ARE GOVERNMENT COMICS HIDDEN?

- Isolated collection
- Scattered locations
- Fragile or rare publications
- Marginalized topics or audiences



INVITATION TO A CONFERENCE

Bam! Pow! Boom! Comics in the Library:
2017 Willis Library Forum Exhibit Series



2019 CTLC Conference




2019 FDL Conference



2020 Flyover Comics Symposium






GIVE YOUR OUTREACH SUPERPOWERS WITH

GOVERNMENT COMICS


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WHAT ARE GOVERNMENT COMICS?

HIDDEN WITHIN YOUR GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS COLLECTION IS A TREASURE OF GREAT VALUE—A SOURCE OF ENORMOUS POWER IF YOU CAN DISCOVER IT AND LEARN HOW TO USE IT WISELY...



- GOVERNMENT COMICS ARE COMIC BOOKS, CARTOONS, AND GRAPHIC NOVELS PRODUCED BY OR FOR GOVERNMENT AGENCIES
- THEY CAN BE PRODUCED IN-HOUSE, OUTSOURCED TO A COMMERCIAL AGENCY, OR REPURPOSED FROM EXISTING COMICS
- THEIR PURPOSE IS ALWAYS PRIMARILY TO TEACH OR PERSUADE RATHER THAN TO ENTERTAIN
- THE COMIC BOOK FORMAT GRABS ATTENTION AND CAN COMMUNICATE COMPLEX IDEAS EFFICIENTLY ON A VISUAL, EMOTIONAL, AND DRAMATIC LEVEL




CHALLENGES TO USING GOVERNMENT COMICS

GOVERNMENT COMICS ARE HARD TO FIND

- EVEN LIBRARIANS HAVE OFTEN NEVER HEARD OF GOVERNMENT COMICS
- DIFFERENT LOCATIONS AND CALL NUMBERS FROM THE GENERAL COLLECTION
- SCATTERED THROUGHOUT THE DOCUMENTS COLLECTION
- DIGITAL ONLY COMICS ARE HARDER TO DISPLAY
- SOME GOVERNMENT COMICS ARE INSIDE OTHER DOCUMENTS (E.G., AS ILLUSTRATIONS)

GOVERNMENT COMICS GET NO RESPECT

- SO CHILDISH
- SO WEIRD
- SO AMATEURISH
- SO KACOTS! SO SEXIST!
- SO FULL OF PROPAGANDA!
- SUCH A WASTE OF TAXES!



GOVERNMENT COMICS CREATORS ARE SOMETIMES ANONYMOUS

- AUTHOR IS ISSUING AGENCY
- OUTSOURCED COMICS ARE WORKS FOR HIRE


GOVERNMENT COMICS ARE OFTEN RESTRICTED

- CONTRACT WORK OR REPURPOSED COMMERCIAL MATERIAL MAY BE COPYRIGHTED
- NEWSPRINT IS FRAGILE
- OLD COMICS MAY BE RARE AND VALUABLE COLLECTIBLES
- NEW COMICS MAY BE ONLY AVAILABLE IN DIGITAL FORMAT

DOCUMENTS ABOUT COMICS

MANY GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS DISCUSS COMICS, THOUGH THEY ARE NOT COMICS THEMSELVES

- CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS AND DOCUMENTS
- JUDICIAL OPINIONS
- COPYRIGHT GUIDELINES
- DRAWING MANUALS
- AND MORE!



ENHANCE YOUR GOVERNMENT COMICS COLLECTION

RESEARCH THE BACKGROUND OF YOUR COMICS

- HISTORY
- AUTHORSHIP
- SIGNIFICANCE

ADD COMICS-RELATED METADATA TO YOUR CATALOG


- GENRE HEADINGS
- RELATIONSHIP DESIGNATORS FOR AUTHOR, ILLUSTRATOR, ETC.
- GENERAL NOTE FIELD "IN COMIC BOOK FORMAT"

FILL GAPS IN YOUR COLLECTION


- FIXED FIELDS FOR NATURE OF CONTENTS: e (COMICS/GRAPHIC NOVELS) AND TARGET AUDIENCE
- FORM SUBJECT SUBDIVISION: "COMIC BOOKS, STRIPS, ETC."
- PURCHASE FROM USED AND RARE COMIC DEALERS
- OBTAIN FROM OTHER LIBRARIES' SURPLUS
- ACQUIRE RELATED NON-GOVERNMENTAL PUBLICATIONS
- BOOKS ABOUT GOVERNMENT COMICS
- GRAPHIC NOVEL VERSIONS OF GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

PROTECT FRAGILE WORKS

- ENVELOPES
- PHASE BOXES
- ARCHIVAL BINDERS



TIP: COPY SIMILAR RECORDS OR CONSULT OCLC MARC BIBLIOGRAPHIC STANDARDS




PUBLICIZE YOUR GOVERNMENT COMICS

PROMOTE GOVERNMENT COMICS DURING PATRON INTERACTIONS


- REFERENCE INTERVIEWS
- BIBLIOGRAPHIC INSTRUCTION SESSIONS
- STUDENT PROJECTS AND ASSIGNMENTS
- PUBLIC SERVICE PROJECTS

SHOW OFF GOVERNMENT COMICS IN PHYSICAL DISPLAYS


- NEW FEATURED BOOKS SHELF
- SEASONAL THEMES
- GATHER INTO CENTRALIZED, PROMINENT LOCATION



TELL STORIES ABOUT GOVERNMENT COMICS ON SOCIAL MEDIA



DELIGHT STUDENTS AND CITIZENS WITH THIS LANGUAGELY EDUCATIONAL AND ENTERTAINING RESOURCE AND YOU WILL BE A SUPERHERO IN YOUR COMMUNITY!



REFERENCES

Graham, Richard. *Government Issues: Comics for the People, 1940s-2000s*. New York: Abrams ComicArts, 2011.

Graham, Richard. *Government Comics Collection*. Lincoln: University Libraries, University of Nebraska-Lincoln. <https://mediacommons.unl.edu/juma/ocwref/s/442d1g>

OCLC. *Bibliographic Formats and Standards*. Dublin, Ohio: OCLC, 2008. . <https://www.oclc.org/bibformats/en.html>

Ray, Sara Vienne. "Developing Comic Book and Graphic Novel Collections in Libraries." *Master's Thesis*. University of Tennessee-Knoxville, 2019. http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_gradthes/828

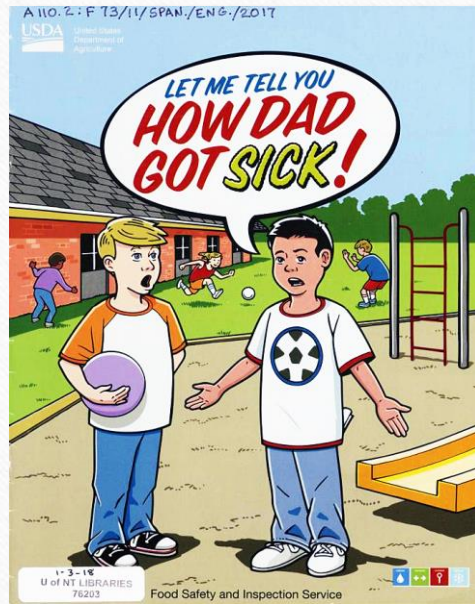
Berg, Joe. "Tales From the Code: Welcome to Government Comics." *Comic Book Legal Defense Fund*, December 14, 2012. <http://cblidf.org/2012/12/tales-from-the-code-welcome-to-government-comics/>

GOVERNMENT COMICS POSTER

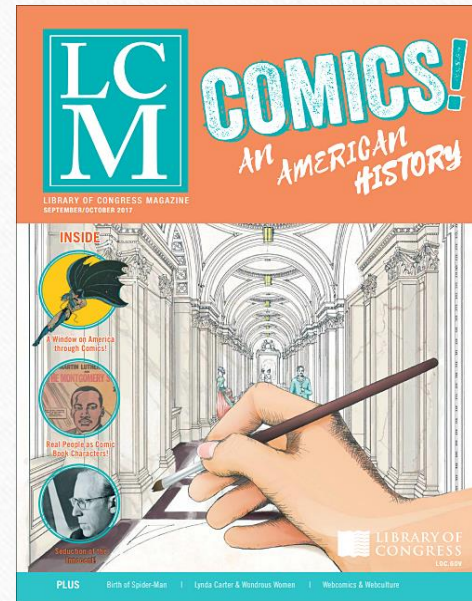
- Comic book colors and textures
- Superman style logo
- Photos of the collection
- Fun imagery
- The Story of a Conference Poster

WHAT IS A GOVERNMENT COMIC?

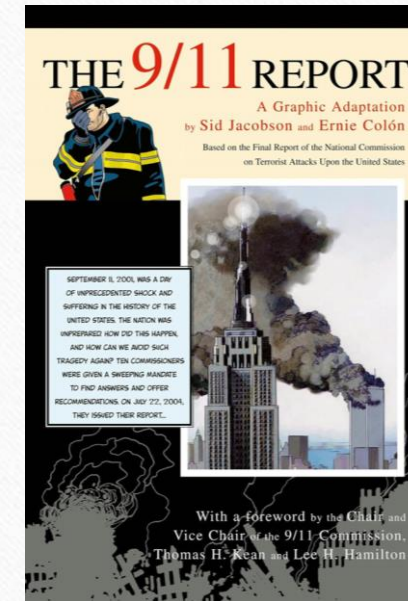
A comic produced or commissioned by a government agency



Government publication about comics

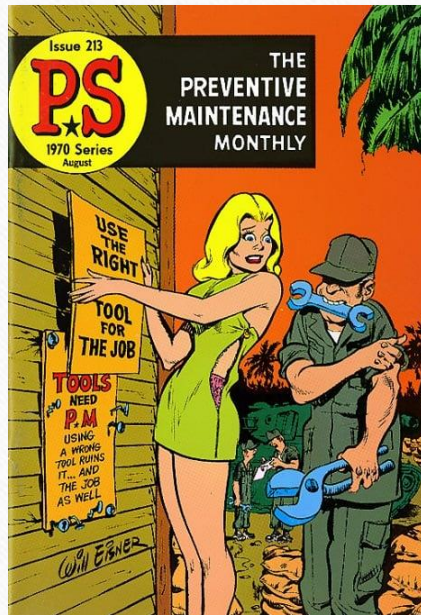


Commercial comic based on government work or data

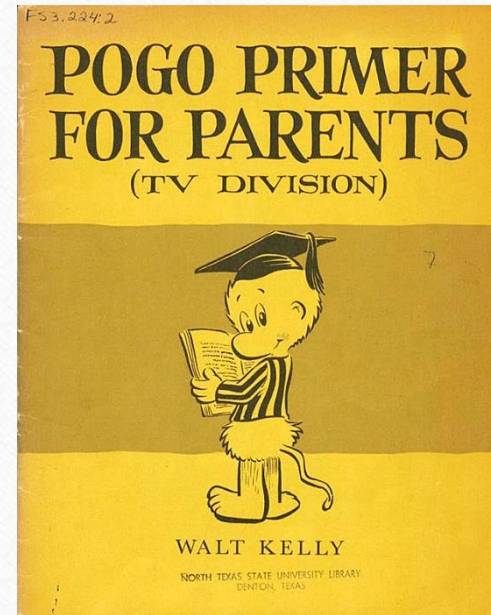


CONFLICTS AND CONTROVERSIES

Racism/Sexism



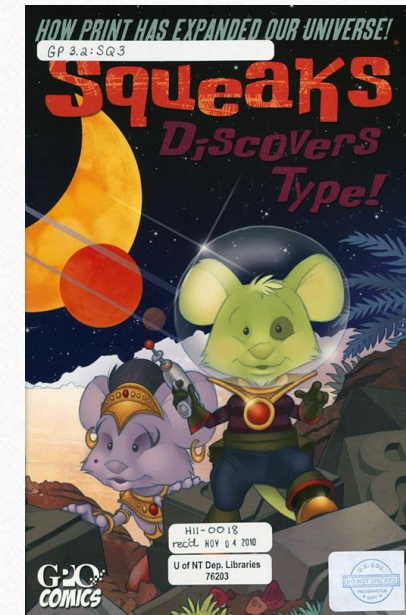
Childish or Trivial



Conflict of Interest

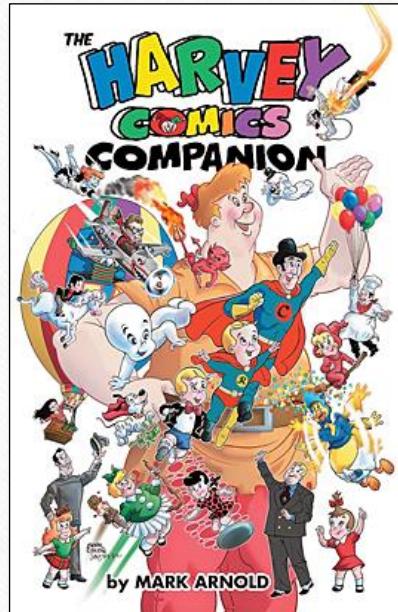


Waste of Funds



LEARNING ABOUT AUTHORS AND ARTISTS

From Reference Works



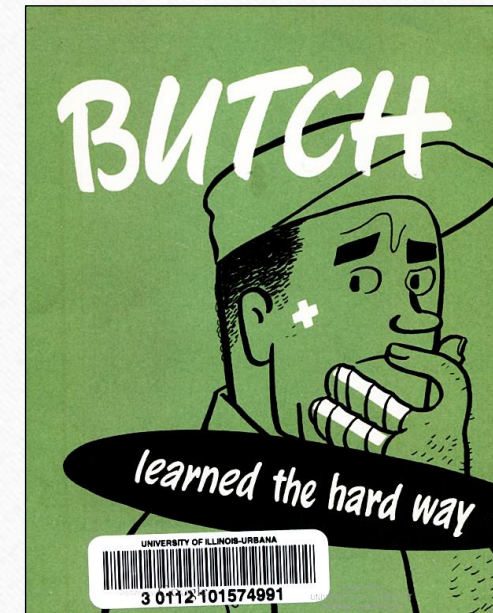
From Readers



From Creators



From Detective Work



ENHANCING OUR COLLECTION

Enhance Existing Comics

- Protect fragile works
- Add metadata to the records
- Acquire ancillary resources

Acquire New Comics

- Fill in the gaps
- Use legitimate sources
- Seek high-quality materials

PROMOTING OUR COLLECTION

Subject Guide



Social Media



Presentations

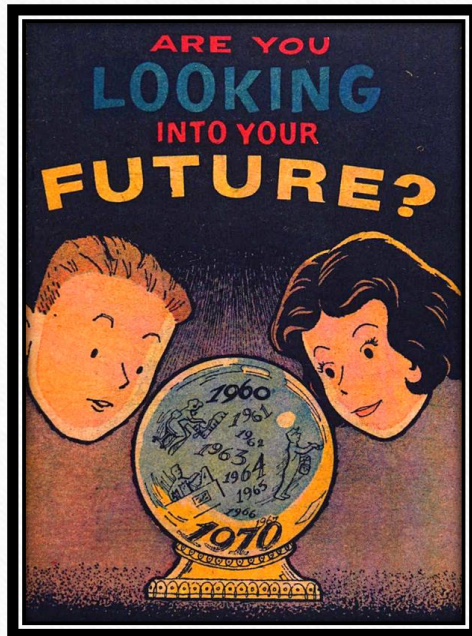
Cautionary Tales The Loveable Screw-Ups of Government Safety Campaign

Bobby Griffith, Government Information Reference Associate
Sycamore Library, University of North Texas
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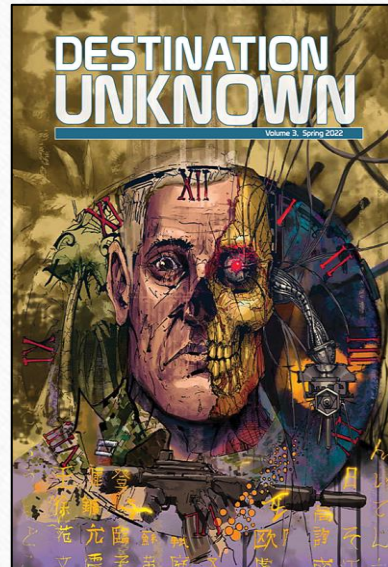
UNT Digital Library



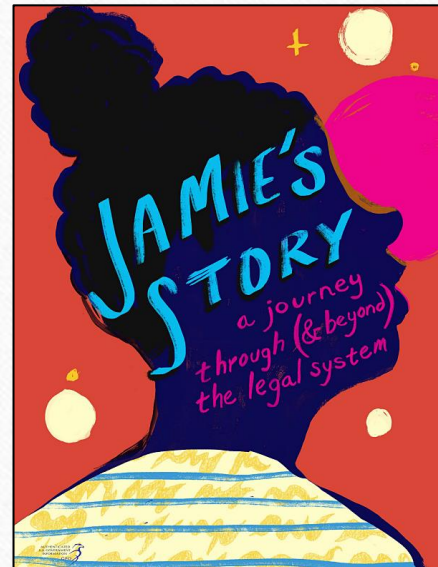
THE FUTURE OF GOVERNMENT COMICS



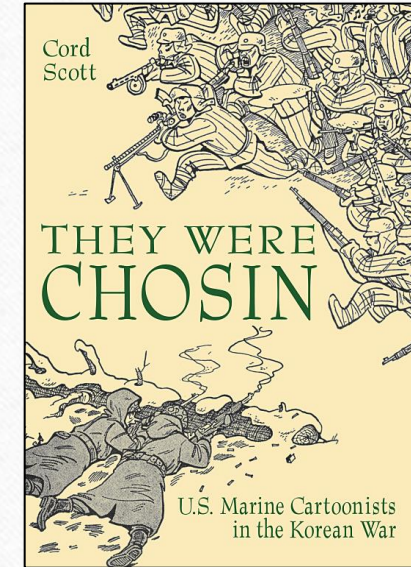
Creative Writing in
the Classroom



Inclusiveness and
Sensitive Subjects



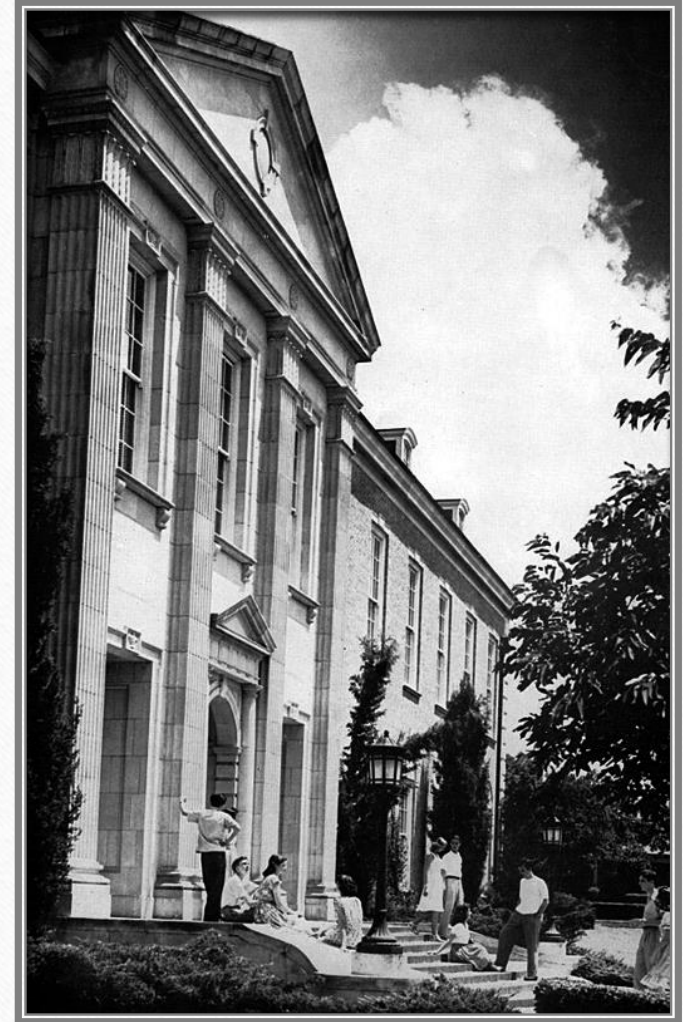
Historical Studies and
Literary/Artistic Criticism



EXPLORE OUR COLLECTION

- [UNT Subject Guide to Government Comics](#)
- [UNT Digital Library—Government Comics Collection](#)
- [Sycamore Library](#)
- [UNT Sycamore Stacks Blog](#)
- [Government Information Connection at Sycamore](#)

[The Yucca, Yearbook of North
Texas State College, 1946](#)



THANK YOU!

We welcome your questions and comments.