

Dissecting the Norm: Research and the Modern Illustrated Periodical

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Abstract: During the twentieth century, magazine illustrations were created to advertise consumer products or illustrate stories, serialized novels and nonfiction pieces. The modern periodical is a product of a commercial culture fueled by the industrial press and the rise of the middle class. The illustrations provide evidence of the prevailing social roles, cultural expectations, and norms of the eras in which they were produced.

Despite their rich content, the traditional lack of academic interest in these materials has rendered these images all but invisible. Recently, however, historians have begun to appreciate the academic and aesthetic value of many of these illustrations.

The Dowd Modern Graphic History Library at Washington University in St. Louis features more than a quarter million illustrations across its collections, which includes the recently acquired Walt Reed Illustration Archive. Over 150,000 works from this archive have been made publicly available as part of an award by the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR). The newly digitized assets have led to many new avenues of cross-disciplinary scholarship including addressing complex depictions of race, gender, sexuality, and class.

In 2017, students used the archive to explore specific topics that addressed complicated depictions of race published in predominately white, middle-class publications. The students addressed many themes: one topic examined how gender and ethnicity was illustrated in Collier's during the 1930s, while another reviewed the problematic undertones of Garrett Price's *Whiteboy* comics. This poster will specifically highlight how the illustrated periodical is being utilized to enrich research practice.

About the Author:

Andrea Degener has worked as the Visual Materials Processing Archivist in Special Collections at Washington University Libraries since 2016. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Illinois State University in 2009 and went on to earn a Master of Fine Arts degree from Washington University in St. Louis in 2011. She earned her Master of Library and Information Science degree from the University of Missouri in 2016. Her current role as Processing Archivist involves working predominantly with the collections in the Dowd Modern Graphic History Library. She has processed collections that include original works of art by prominent nineteenth and twentieth century illustrators and graphic artists in addition to mass produced reproductions of illustrated works. Most recently, she managed the resampling, uploading and cataloging of over 150,000 digitized magazine tear sheets from the Walt Reed Illustration Archive as part of a grant award from the Council on Library and Information Resources.

Skye Lacerte, Curator of the Dowd Modern Graphic History Library since 2008, has thirteen years of experience as an archivist and curator. Ms. Lacerte studied Art History at UC Irvine, earning a bachelor's degree, and went on to earn a Masters in Library and Information Science at San Jose State. As curator, Skye works with original materials by some of the 19th and 20th

century's most well-known illustrators and graphic artists. In her nine years as curator, she has worked to consistently increase holdings, growing the library from six collections to over forty. Ms. Lacerte has also led numerous projects to increase visibility and accessibility of the MGHL's collections, including the digitization of the Walt Reed Illustration Archive, for which the MGHL was awarded a \$250,000 grant award from the Council on Library and Information Resources.