Tomorrow's treasures

By RYAN E. SMITH
TOLEDO STAFF WRITER
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THE BROWNES are major donors and the namesake family of the popular culture library, which Mr. Browne founded.

By BILL SCHURK, senior popular culture librarian. “If people really want to become interested in the history and the culture of pop culture, they have to learn to love it,” he said.

Autographed poster for the 2004 movie Napoleon Dynamite.

The poster always reminds me of the power of pop culture to make a connection with the masses. The film is so popular that many of my students have seen it at least 10 times. For some reason, it speaks to their generation.

Charles Coletta, popular culture instructor. (The poster is signed by three of the film’s cast members who visited campus two years ago.)

TV Guide (Week of June 7, 1980)

To record a tape, a large plastic Batman bubble bath container (1995)

“Chances are what [other libraries] collected is what the popular culture library did,” said Bill Schurk, the university’s formal popular culture librarian. “If they didn’t want to invest in it, neither did we.”

Beyond being the largest and most comprehensive popular culture library in the Midwest, the collection has been designated as one of the top such collections in the country.

Four years and well over 150,000 pop culture items later, you know who won that argument.

“Mr. Browne said, ‘I chose it based on the strength of the novel from which it was made. It’s one of the greatest pop culture novels ever written.’”

“Somebody asks about something, and then you think of something and then you think of something else and then you think of something else and then you think of something else... I remember reading Batman comic when I was younger...”

This is where people come when they want to study how small town is represented in romance novels. Or how Hillary Clinton has been portrayed in tabloid magazines. It’s the kind of material that invites inquiries about anything.

“Sometimes, I get questions, like the history of the cream pie in America,” said Nancy Down, the library’s emeritus head librarian. “It’s also the kind of material that sometimes it’s really hard to collect.”

“Sometimes you end up collecting something that another libraries ignored,” said Mr. Browne, once a KPIC-TV news director turned librarian. “What we’re trying to do is save the junk of today until it becomes the treasure of tomorrow.”

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There are also shows all the mass-market tie-ins to the original popular culture hit. For example, for Superman.

“To record a tape, a large plastic Batman bubble bath container (1995).

Comic novels. The Batman character has become the biggest star of all


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