



STORIES FROM THE STACKS

The Ohioana Library Association collects and preserves the work of Ohio authors, illustrators, musicians, and ordinary citizens. Started in 1929 by Martha Kinney Cooper, our stacks now hold thousands of stories. This blog will tell some of these stories, and we invite you to come visit us to see them for yourself. Find us at www.ohioana.org

SIX DEGREES OF SEPARATION

September 4, 2024

Sometimes when exploring our stacks, I find unexpected and even personal connections. This is going to be one such story. The story begins in 1929. There are four, perhaps unlikely, main organizations in this story: Ohioana Library Association, Indianola Junior High School, Battelle Memorial Institute, and The Ohio State University. I start this story by briefly introducing each organization in 1929.

Our founder, Martha Kinney Cooper, wife of Governor Myers Y. Cooper, thought it was important that the state have a place where books written by Ohio authors could be gathered and preserved for all future generations. To assist with her plans, she gathered some of the most prominent people from around Ohio and brought them together to develop the plans for this library. In 1929, the Ohioana Library Association (then known as the Martha Kinney Cooper Ohioana Library) was born.

Indianola Junior High School was the first dedicated junior high school in the country. It first opened in 1909 with space for 650 students. In 1929, a new, bigger building opened on the site of the old Indianola Amusement Park. The building was designed by Ohio State University Architect Howard Dwight Smith who also designed Ohio Stadium.

Battelle Memorial Institute was founded in 1925, as specified in Gordon Battelle's will. Battelle was well-known in the iron and steel industry before his unexpected death at age 40 from complications caused by an appendectomy. A great believer in the value of research, he left his fortune to start Battelle. On October 3, 1929, the Battelle building on King Avenue was completed, and the cornerstone was laid.



Mrs. Cooper in the original library



Indianola Junior High School



Gordon Battelle



"The Long Walk"

In 1929, William Oxley Thompson was the President Emeritus of Ohio State University. Thompson was involved in developing the curriculum for the new Indianola Junior High school, and "The Long Walk" that started in front of the main library, crossed the Oval, and passed through the Indianola neighborhood, and ended at the school's door. In 2018, OSU purchased the Indianola Junior High School building. It had been empty, and the university wanted it to be preserved.

Four organizations, seemingly unconnected by anything other than a year. Until you look closer and find there are only six degrees of separation between us . . .

- Battelle and The Ohio State University are currently partnering to renovate and historically preserve the Indianola building, allowing Metro School, a STEM middle and high school, to move its students there beginning in January 2025. A personal connection here—while I was a VP at COSI, I organized the very first meeting between Battelle and OSU that started Metro High School. My partner, David, is now overseeing the renovations of the building in his role at Battelle.



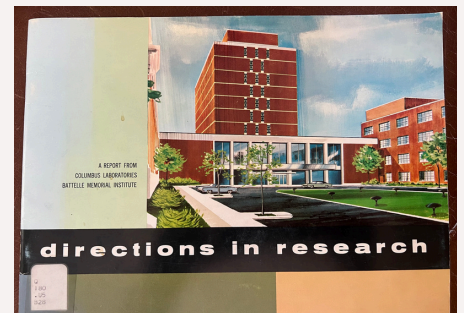
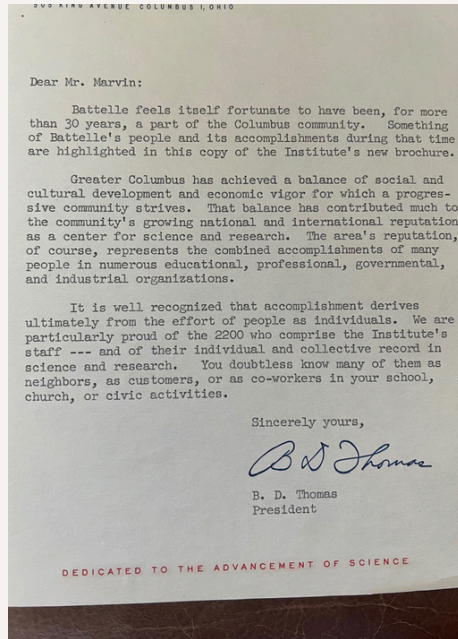
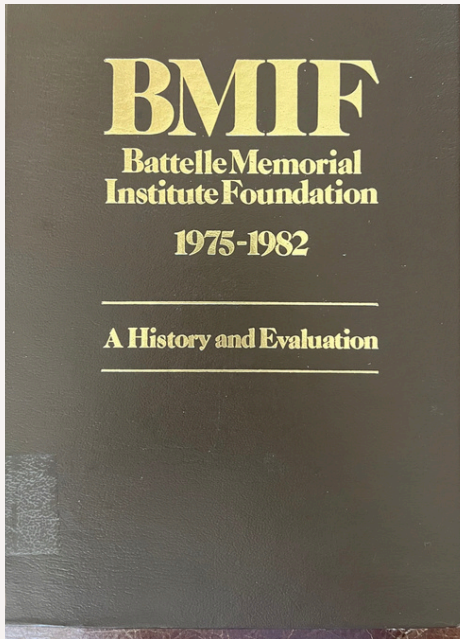
Depictions of the new Metro Middle and High School facilities at Indianola

- Columbus Schools Superintendent J. A. Shawan and OSU President Emeritus William Oxley Thompson created the original curriculum for the 1929 Indianola Junior High. Thompson was one of the invitees at the first organizational meeting of the Ohioana Library and was the committee member who presented the plan for the Ohioana Library which would "be of distinctive service to the Governor and all succeeding Governors, who would in turn take patriotic pride in its development, and which in years to come, would have a tradition of its own." (Judy, M.C., 1964, pg. 6) This meeting occurred two days after Battelle laid the cornerstone for their building.

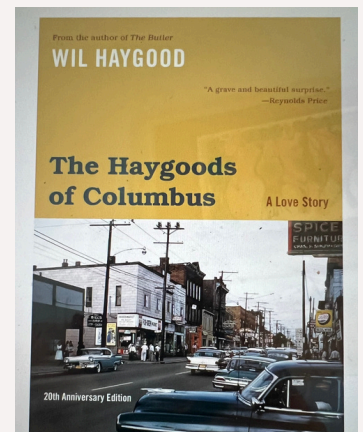
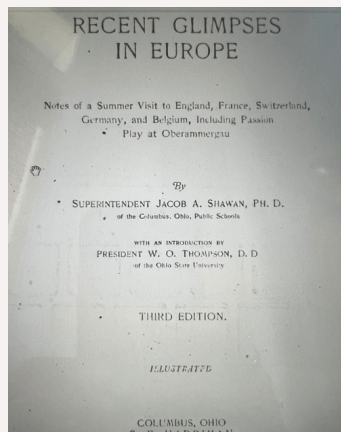
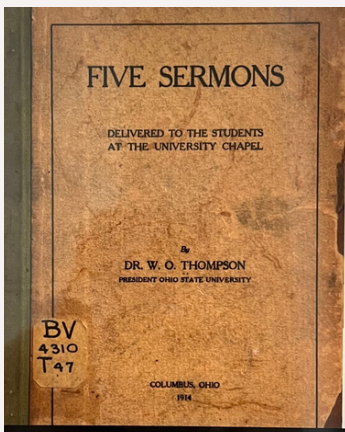


- Since 2001, the Ohioana Library, along with the State Library of Ohio, has been located in the former corporate center of the Jeffrey Mining Company, a successful Columbus company specializing in the manufacture of equipment for coal extraction. Mrs. Jeffrey served on the Battelle Memorial Institute Foundation for two years from 1976 to 1977. The Jeffrey family sponsored the coal mine exhibit at the original COSI site, pieces of which live in the current facility. I worked at both of these locations and took my own children to the original site where the coal mine was a favorite of their visits.

- The Ohioana Library stacks contain and preserve books about Battelle’s research, discovery, and Foundation activities. Inside the cover of *Research at Battelle Memorial Institute: The First Thirty Years*, I found a typed letter from B. D. Thomas, the third President of Battelle, to Walter Rumsey Marvin, the second director of the Ohioana Library (from 1954 to 1965), written when President Thomas donated the book to our library for preservation! I love these unexpected finds!



- Our collection also contains books by both J. A. Shawan and William Oxley Thompson. Ohioana Library has presented the Ohio Book Award to Indianola alumni Wil Haygood twice in the “Nonfiction” category (1998 for *The Haygoods of Columbus: A Love Story* and 2016 for *Showdown: Thurgood Marshall and the Supreme Court Nomination That Changed America*) and once in the “About Ohio” category for *Tigerland* in 2019.



The moral of this story is that when you look deeper, you can often find unexpected connections—connections that make a community. Our stacks preserve the stories of these community connections, both locally and all across Ohio. We look forward to deepening our partnerships with all of the organizations in this story: with Metro students who will soon be less than two miles from our library, with Battelle to help them preserve their stories for future generations, and with the libraries at OSU, already a sponsor of an award for the Ohio Book Awards. Their stories all live in our stacks, and we feel deeply connected to each of them. It is, indeed, a small world after all.

If you love stories as much as I do, and would like to help preserve these stories for future generations, please consider donating at www.ohioana.org. All donations of \$50 or more receive a print copy of our magazine, the *Ohioana Quarterly*.