

# Comics in Italy: the Preservation Challenge

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Preserving **Comics'** heritage is a new topic in Italy.



**In Italy there is no public policy about Comics.**

It's a consequence of Comics not being considered "high culture" for a very long time. As such, comics were not considered worthy of preservation.



This situation is very unfortunate, since Italy has one of the world's richest comics traditions.

Things are changing, though: Comics are in the spotlight of Italian cultural establishment as never before (**Lucca Comics & Games** played a key role in this process)



Wider socio-economical context is also challenging. Italy is still suffering a long economical crisis, and public investment in culture has declined.



**The Big Problem, A side:** Italian cultural heritage is far too big for efficient preservation.

**The Big Problem, B side:** culture is not as high in Italy's priorities as it should be

Italy has around **5000 museums**. Not the highest number in Europe (Germany has more), but the highest museums/populations ratio (one museum every 12.000 people).



Museums, both public and private, struggle to join preservation and promotion of cultural heritage. "Promotion", in this context, means "making it relevant in contemporary culture".

The general situation pushes museums to become more attractive, more welcoming to the "uninitiated" (Italian museums often score badly in this respect).

Of course, this trend has good and bad sides. Museums are asked to be as much self-sustaining as possible, which is very difficult for typically no-profit institutions.





For Comics, this can be an advantage: Comics (actually, some imaginative worlds traditionally linked to the medium, like American superheroes) are the heart of contemporary pop culture. It's a favourable cultural context, which must be exploited.



In this challenging scenario, Lucca is trying for the second time to establish its Comics Museum.



Lucca, Tuscany, is the Italian "city of Comics". It hosts what is arguably the first Comics Festival in the world, born in 1966 (before Angouleme, before San Diego). The Festival has now widen its scope, is called Lucca Comics & Games and is one of the biggest events in the world. The festival is run by Lucca Crea Srl, owned by Lucca municipality.



In 2002 Lucca Municipality also started a Comics museum, that never handled preservation properly, even for its financial constraints. Its fatal flaw, though, was it was separated from the Festival. In years, the Festival thrived, the Museum struggled.

In 2014 the Museum was shut down for renovations. There are funds from Regione Toscana and Culture ministry for its renewal. After that, it will be run by Lucca Crea.



**Challenge & strategy: how to make it work?**

# 1

## **Synergy between festival and museum.**

It doesn't mean draining resources from the Festival to Museum, it means leveraging their combined strength.

- Fund raising, sponsorship, etc.
- Collection growth (stakeholders are the same: publishers, artists, collectors, etc.)

## 2

### **Preservation.**

strategic partnership with local University (talks are underway).  
Objective is getting funds for research assignments.

3

**Applying to EU calls** and other national funding opportunities.