Selected Readings
Libraries and Comics Scholarship
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"Cartooning the Cambridge University Libraries."
- Author(s): Clare Louise Trowell
- Full Citation: Trowell, Clare Louise. "Cartooning the Cambridge University Libraries." *Journal of Information Literacy* 15, no. 3 (2021): 143-161. https://doi.org/10.11645/15.3.2926
- Abstract: Comics and cartoons are valued in twenty-first century popular culture and are increasingly used as 'Applied Comics' to help communicate key messages and information in society. However, there is less evidence of cartoons and comics being used to communicate with and engage library users in learning, information literacy (IL) and research support.
This paper explores case studies of how several different projects have utilized comics as a medium to deliver key messages about library services to support teaching and research at Cambridge University Libraries. The use of comics and cartoons in a library context is examined while framed in a theory of comics and visual learning. The reception and output of the comics and cartoons with different audiences at Cambridge University Libraries is explored; the paper proposes that further research could be done to examine the potential of comics in communication and IL.

- Key Points:
  - Comics can help communicate with diverse audiences
  - Cartoon/comic postcards to raise awareness and engagement
  - Comics as library help and directions signage

Comics and Critical Librarianship : Reframing the Narrative in Academic Libraries / Edited by Olivia Piepmeier and Stephanie Grimm.
- Author(s): Olivia Piepmeier and Stephanie Grimm
- Full Citation: Piepmeier, Olivia, and Stephanie Grimm. *Comics and Critical Librarianship : Reframing the Narrative in Academic Libraries / Edited by Olivia Piepmeier and Stephanie Grimm.* Sacramento, CA: Library Juice Press, 2019.
- Abstract (publisher supplied): Highlights the use and focus of comics by librarians and library workers who practice critical librarianship.
- Key Points (author supplied):
  - Comic collections have existed in academic institutions for over fifty years. Libraries have taken a variety of approaches to address differing philosophies and needs for their collections, but discourse has typically focused on the practical concerns of management and organization, considering the best ways to collect, catalog, shelve, and share comic books and trades, graphic novels, and more. As a growing body of practice and scholarship, critical librarianship provides essential perspectives on the power structure, systems, and social justice concerns within libraries. This edited work considers comics librarianship through the lens of critical librarianship, focusing on work done in and around the academic library. Presented through case studies, original research and essays, and personal reflection, the book engages with topics from collection and cataloging to teaching and outreach, with contributors representing academic libraries and academic archival collections of varying sizes and populations across the United States and Canada.

"Comics and Teaching/learning the Mother Tongue"
- Author(s): Cristina Manuela Sá
- Full Citation: Sá, Cristina Manuela. "Comics and Teaching/learning the Mother Tongue." *Indagatio Didactica* 4, no. 4 (2012).
- Abstract (author supplied): Teaching/learning the mother tongue is a complex process essential in several domains: success at school, qualification for future professional performance and critical citizenship. These aims demand its approach in a transversal way focusing on the development of competences such as the ones related to communication (generally viewed as verbal communication and mainly related to reading and writing). Nevertheless, verbal communication relies also on nonverbal elements such as the image and people need to know how to read them. It is common sense to believe that it is easier to understand a message presented in images than the ones using words. However, there are many adults that do not feel at ease when they must read images. Thus, comics may be used in the mother tongue classroom. They may be used as a resource, seen as a content (when considered as a text genre), [and] studied as a language with special characteristics. In the process, they can contribute to the development of competences in reading comprehension. Besides, they may also become the issue of the work done in the classroom, if one agrees that involving the pupils in projects is a good way of thinning the distance between school and everyday life and developing competences in them. A project built around comics does contribute to the development of communicative competences (both verbal and nonverbal) and the development of competences in autonomous and teamwork, so important in modern society.
- Key Points:
  - Comics have a benefit to teaching language due to the visual elements
  - Comics can be used as tools to improve reading comprehension
  - Creating comics can help improve communication competencies

"Comics, the King of Libraries."
- Author(s): Heidi Macdonald
- Full Citation: Macdonald, Heidi. "Comics, the King of Libraries." *Publishers Weekly* 264, no. 20 (2017): 30.
- Abstract (author supplied):[...]libraries, bound by acquisitions guidelines that require validation of books' quality (generally a review in a reputable trade or consumer publication) that is not often available for self-published works, are struggling to include them. [...]comics in digital formats--such as e-books, streamed comics, and webcomics--are also difficult for librarians to justify purchasing: despite the growing demand for these works, there are only a few library vendors--OverDrive and Hoopla Digital among them--that offer them to libraries. Attempts to Ban Graphic Novels Book challenges--the term for a formal effort to remove a title--filed by parents who find certain works objectionable are a constant in libraries. [...]it should come as no surprise that two graphic novels topped the American Library Association's annual list of the most challenged books: *Big Hard Sex Criminals* by Matt Fraction and Chip Zdarsky collects a popular crime comedy series about a couple who can stop time when they have sex and use their powers to rob banks. According to Larue, in the library where it was challenged, it was appropriately shelved in the adult section and clearly labeled as such. Digital Comics Lending for Libraries Making it easier for libraries to offer digital comics is Hoopla, a digital streaming service providing a wide variety of content to public libraries. Hoopla solved problems librarians faced using other digital-lending programs by offering a subscription model, which allows the library systems to pay in advance for a set number of checkouts.
- Key Points:
  - Attempts to ban graphic novels

- - - Parent campaigns for banning certain graphic novels often due to miscategorization of mature graphic novels in children's sections
    - Difficulties of overcoming perception that comics are inherently for young audiences
    - Political climate aggravating these concerns
  - Acquiring Webcomics
    - Difficult to acquire as most webcomics are self-published, and library systems are not set up to purchase from most webcomic vendors
    - Most librarians self-purchase and donate to acquire these titles
    - Online archiving a possibility
  - Growing Demand
    - Popularity of comics with children is taken as a given, but adult collections are being overlooked
    - Growing general perception of the legitimacy of comics as a library collection item
    - Today's librarian students excited for the opportunities with graphic novels

"Graphic Novels Are Real Books": Comparing Graphic Novels to Traditional Text Novels
- Author(s): Eileen M. Richardson
- Full Citation: Richardson, Eileen M. 2017. ""Graphic Novels are Real Books": Comparing Graphic Novels to Traditional Text Novels." *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin* 83 (5): 24-31. http://libproxy.sdsu.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/graphic-novels-are-real-books-comparing/docview/1929675667/se-2?accountid=13758.
- Abstract (author supplied): A small action research study comparing the achievement of students who read a novel in traditional format to the achievement of those who read the same work in graphic novel format is described. The results indicated little difference in achievement but inspired interesting reflections about motivation and the appropriateness of different formats for different readers.
- Key Points:
  - "The data showed that students in Grade 5 on average scored the same after reading the book; there was no difference in comprehension scores between those who read the traditional text and those who read the graphic novel. The results of Grade 6 data on average showed the graphic novel readers scoring higher than the traditional text readers"
  - Motivation to read is a key indicator of a student's reading comprehension and performance. Graphic novels tend to elicit higher readership in unmotivated readers, and develop reading habits.
  - Graphic novels can serve as a gateway for traditional text novels in unmotivated students who might otherwise not pursue reading.

"Graphic Novels in Academic Libraries: From Maus to Manga and Beyond"
- Author(s): Lorena O'English, J. Gregory Matthews, and Elizabeth Blakesley Lindsay
- Full Citation: O'English, Lorena, J. Gregory Matthews, and Elizabeth Blakesley Lindsay. 2006. "Graphic Novels in Academic Libraries: From Maus to Manga and Beyond." *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 32 (2): 173-182. doi:10.1016/j.acalib.2005.12.002.
- Abstract (author supplied): This article addresses graphic novels and their growing popularity in academic libraries. Graphic novels are increasingly used as instructional resources, and they play an important role in supporting the recreational reading mission of academic libraries. The article will also tackle issues related to the cataloging and classification of graphic novels and discuss ways to use them for marketing and promotion of library services.

- Key Points:
  - The Rise of Graphic Novels in Libraries
    - Graphic novels can promote literacy.
      - Gretchen E. Schwarz, "Graphic Novels for Multiple Literacies" J*ournal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 46.3 (2002), pp. 262-265
    - Reading graphic novels "may require more complex cognitive skills than reading text alone."
      - Michael R. Lavin, "Comic Books and Graphic Novels for Libraries," *Serials Review*, 24.2 (1998), pp. 31-45
    - An informal poll of the LES listserv members showed that a number of universities, including Duke, MIT, Michigan State, Chicago, UC Berkeley, and Rutgers, are collecting graphic novels fairly extensively, with recreational reading in mind
      - LES-L (ACRL Literatures in English Section listserv), personal e-mails, March 2005.
  - Categorizing, Classifying Graphic Novels
    - Cataloging Graphic Novels: still in debate in terms of Dewey system
    - Classifying Graphic novels: currently classified under cartoons, author believes this should change
    - Categorization of Serial Releases:Frank Miller's *Sin City* as example, pg. 117
  - Promoting Graphic Novels in Academia
    - Library staff, as well as students and faculty, need to be convinced of the academic merit of graphic novels
    - Cataloging and combating theft concerns
  - Faculty/Staff Outreach
    - Barriers due to perceived lack of prestige and merit of medium
    - "Librarians may want to consider an educational campaign to increase faculty awareness of graphic novels as literary, artistic, and discipline-based resources for scholarship and teaching"

"Graphic Novels in the Classroom: Engaging Students with the Visual and Textual Bridge"
- Author(s): Tara Ann George
- Full Citation: George, Tara Ann. "Graphic Novels in the Classroom: Engaging Students with the Visual and Textual Bridge." (Masters thesis, State University of New York at Stony Brook, 2020). ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, Order No. 28089467. http://libproxy.sdsu.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/graphic-novels-classroom-engaging-students-with/docview/2451409085/se-2?accountid=13758.
- Abstract (author supplied): Educators can use [comics] to engage students with class content to facilitate learning for a wide range of learners and to challenge students to develop their multimodal literacy skills.
- Key Points:
  - Multimodal learning" benefits to literary skills derived from analyzing words, images, and sequence in concert
    - Source: Kukkonen, Karin. Studying Comics and Graphic Novels. Wiley, 2013.
  - Different forms of literary analysis: analyzing visual imagery, sequence, cross-issue character development and plot development.
  - Digital/web comics
    - Audio and video aspects
    - Reader influence over story

- - ■ Further opportunities for analysis
    - ■ Student engagement with novelty of medium
  - ○ More engagement with the modern student, for whom linear, conventional texts are not appealing to
  - ○ Discussion in the context of three graphic novels:
    - ■ Gene Yang's *American Born Chinese*
    - ■ John Lewis' *March*
    - ■ Gareth Hind's *Romeo & Juliet*

The Library's Guide to Graphic Novels / Edited by John Ballestro
- Author(s): John Ballestro
- Full Citation: Ballestro, John. *The Library's Guide to Graphic Novels / Edited by John Ballestro*. Chicago: ALA Editions, 2020.
- Abstract (author supplied): This monograph provides an overview of the various aspects involved in selecting, acquiring and cataloging graphic novels and making them available to patrons
- Key Points:
  - ○ No digital copy available, copy available at SDSU library.
  - ○ Author supplied key points:
    - ■ a cultural history of comics and graphic novels from their World War II origins to today, providing a solid grounding for newbies and fresh insights for all;
    - ■ catching up on the Big Two's reboots: Marvel's 10 and DC's 4;
    - ■ five questions to ask when evaluating nonfiction graphic novels and 30 picks for a core collection;
    - ■ key publishers and cartoonists to consider when adding international titles;
    - ■ developing a collection that supports curriculum and faculty outreach to ensure wide usage, with catalogers' tips for organizing your collection and improving discovery;
    - ■ real-world examples of how libraries treat graphic novels, such as an in-depth profile of the development of the Penn Libraries' manga collection;
    - ■ how to integrate the emerging field of graphic medicine into the collection; and
    - ■ specialized resources like The Cartoonists of Color and Queer Cartoonists databases, the open access scholarly journal Comic Grid, and the No Flying, No Tights website.

"Librarians' Perceptions of Educational Values of Comic Books: A Comparative Study Between Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, Australia and New Zealand."
- Author(s): Patrick Lo, Bradley Allard, Kevin K.W Ho, Joyce Chao-chen Chen, Daisuke Okada, Andrew Stark, James Henri, and Chung-chin Lai
- Full Citation: Lo, Patrick, Bradley Allard, Kevin K.W Ho, Joyce Chao-chen Chen, Daisuke Okada, Andrew Stark, James Henri, and Chung-chin Lai. "Librarians' Perceptions of Educational Values of Comic Books: A Comparative Study Between Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, Australia and New Zealand." *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science* 51, no. 4 (2019): 1103-1119.
- Abstract (author provided): Comic books are becoming increasingly popular in the field of education. In the past, comic books were excluded from school libraries and classrooms. However, with the resurgence in the popularity of comic books and students' increased demands for them, they are now considered as recreational reading with educational value. In response to this, school libraries have begun collecting comic books and including them as part of their

regular collections. This research paper reflects on the current situation of comic books in primary and middle school library collections and examines school librarians' perceptions towards educational values of comics. The investigation was launched in Hong Kong, Taiwan, New Zealand, Australia and Japan – making comparisons amongst different levels (primary school and secondary school), and different types (public school and private school) of schools in five different countries. Questionnaire surveys were sent to selected school librarians and were the main method of data collection. A total number of 683 responses were collected for this study. Research results include librarians' attitudes towards comic books in school libraries, adolescent readers' use of school libraries, their reading and borrowing practices, as well as other problems encountered with the on-going maintenance of comic books as part of the school libraries' regular collections.

- Key Points:
  - Across regions, perceptions of comic books as an academic resource are gaining ground
  - Large numbers of librarians surveyed gradually accepting comics as legitimate literary form
  - More resistance in Asian countries, where librarians considered comics as having no real educational value
  - Little resistance in Oceana from parents, teachers, librarians
  - However, cited cataloging as a major challenge
  - Most compelling reason for inclusion of comics in collections for librarians is their ability to attract more students to libraries
  - "The results of this study can provide valuable context and support for new librarians who are looking to maintain a comic book collection or attempting to legitimize this form of literature" (1116).

"It's About Superman, but It's More Than That: A Graphic Novel Pedagogy in Middle Years Classrooms"
- Author(s): Jason Dehart
- Full Citation: DeHart, Jason. "It's About Superman, but It's More Than That: A Graphic Novel Pedagogy in Middle Years Classrooms." *Literacy Learning* 29, no. 1 (2021): 47-52.
- Abstract (author supplied): In this exploration, the author offers case studies of three teachers who have found both challenges and delights when incorporating graphic novels and comic strips into their middle school curriculum during the COVID-19 pandemic. This work builds on a previous study examining the use of film as text and continues to explore the affordances of a range of multimodal texts. The pedagogical function and possibilities of these texts, alongside their potential for creating engagement in virtual learning for diverse learners, is highlighted.
- Key Points:
  - Discussion of the usage of comics in both in-person and virtual learning
  - Opportunities from comics: "thematic and character analysis, text read aloud, comics composing and other possibilities"
  - Academic pushback due to overreliance on images in comics, rather than text focus

"The Potential of Educational Comics as a Health Information Medium"
- Author(s): Sarah McNicol
- Full Citation: McNicol, Sarah. "The Potential of Educational Comics as a Health Information Medium." *Health Information and Libraries Journal* 34, no. 1 (2017): 20-31.
- Abstract (author supplied):
  - Objectives: To investigate ways in which educational comics might provide support in dealing with feelings and attitudes towards health conditions, as well as improving

understanding of factual information and to identify potential weakness of comics as a medium for health information.
- ○ Methods: Semi-structured interviewees with eleven university students who either had a mental or physical health condition themselves or had a family member with a health condition.
- ○ Results: The result highlighted the potential value of comics as a format for health information. In addition to conveying factual information, comics offer opportunities for self-awareness, reassurance, empathy, companionship and a means to explore the impact of illness on family relationships. However, there are notable barriers to the greater use of comics to provide health information, namely, a lack of awareness of, and easy access to, educational comics, along with the perception that comics are exclusively lighthearted and for children.
- ○ Conclusions: Currently, the full potential of comics in health settings is not being realised. Health information professionals may be in a position to address this issue through identifying, cataloging, indexing and promoting comics as a legitimate format for health information.
- ○ Keywords: bibliotherapy; consumer health information; health information needs; information sources; interviews, learning; patient information; qualitative research
- Key Points (author supplied):
    - ○ Narrative, characterisation and images are key features of comics that may be important when using this medium for health information purposes.
    - ○ Comics can offer patients and family members opportunities for self-awareness, reassurance, empathy, companionship and ways to explore the impact of illness on family relationships.
    - ○ The potential impact of visual and textual metaphors in health comics is complex and needs to be explored through further research.
    - ○ Health information workers are well positioned to help improve awareness of, and access to, health comics and to highlight their potential role in health care.
    - ○ Through drawing attention to their use as information sources, information workers can help to change perceptions of comics as being merely frivolous and for children.

Putting the "Extra" in Extraordinary: Creating a Library Comic Con
- Author(s): Molly Virello
- Full Citation: Virello, Molly. "Putting the 'Extra' in Extraordinary: Creating a Library Comic Con." *Children & Libraries* 17, no. 1 (2019): 31-34.
- Abstract (author supplied): I am a lady of many hats—children's librarian by day, Renaissance faire rogue and comic con cosplay queen by night (and weekend). I was drawn to these activities not only because of my passion, but because of other people's exuberance for the characters, the activities, and the stories. It's something I see in the library all the time when children want to share stories about their hobbies or their new favorite book.That exuberance got me thinking - how could I share my weekend passions with my library patrons?
- Key Points:
    - ○ Libraries hosting small-scale comic cons to make them more accessible to lower income individuals who cannot afford larger conventions
    - ○ How to put on a financially viable manageable con at a library
        - ■ Social media outreach
        - ■ Community fundraising
        - ■ Invited food truck to sell to attendees
        - ■ Rotating schedule of activities to prevent boredom

- - Successfully hosted 900 attendees

"Multimodalities Multiplied: Teaching Comics in an Active Learning Classroom."
- Author(s): Chester Scoville
- Full Citation: Scoville, Chester. "Multimodalities Multiplied: Teaching Comics in an Active Learning Classroom." *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Culture, and Composition* 18, no. 3 (2018): 540-546.
- Abstract (author supplied): Teaching the graphic novel in English and literature courses can be a challenge, because some of the most commonly used techniques for analyzing literature are not entirely compatible with the analysis of a multimodal form like comics. Additionally, the traditional classroom can be a problematic context for the graphic novel, especially in large lecture spaces, with their unimodal, instructor-centered design. The experience of teaching graphic novels in an active learning classroom suggests that a multimodal approach placed in a learning space designed for multimodal approaches can enhance and improve the experience of teaching the graphic novel in undergraduate courses.
- Key Points:
  - Classroom arrangement itself can influence the teaching of comics
  - Advocates for usage of Active Learning Classroom (ALC)
    - No front, series of round tables, wired connections
  - Helps avoid unimodal verbal approach to teaching comics
  - Virtual aspects aid in annotation of comics - markup text without damaging or interfering with it
  - Three primary takeaways (p. 545):
    - The formation of groups allows students to pool their resources and divide their labor in the analysis of texts.
    - Whenever possible the use of many modes of communication, not just the verbal and visual of comics but the gestural, auditory, and situated. If the space is not designed for this, then I will look for ways to adapt the space to the modes rather than sacrifice the modes to the space.
    - "space affects behaviour, use of space affects how one relates to space, and space shapes expectations about teaching and learning."

"Reading Capital: Graphic Novels, Typography, and Literacy."
- Author(s): Michelle Ann Abate
- Full Citation: Abate, Michelle Ann. "Reading Capital: Graphic Novels, Typography, and Literacy." *English Journal* 108, no. 1 (2018): 66-72.
- Abstract (author supplied): Comics in the US have a long and complicated history with literacy. In the 1950s, child psychologist Fredric Wertham launched his now-infamous crusade against the genre. In numerous articles and interviews, he argued that comic books had a deleterious impact on young people. A very large proportion of children who cannot read well habitually read comic books, Wertham observed. He continued, They are not really readers, but gaze mostly at the pictures, picking up a word here and there. In the opening years of the twenty-first century, however, popular perceptions about the educational potential of comics began to change. With the emergence of graphic novels, the genre was seen as playing an important role in what came to be known as multimodal forms of literacy. As Frank Serafini explains about this concept, The texts that adolescents encounter today are often multimodal, meaning they incorporate a variety of modes, including visual images, hypertext, and graphic design elements along with written text.
- Key Points:

- Rules and benefits of specific typeface
- All caps difficult to read because "doing so takes more time, more optical effort, and more mental concentration" since all letters are uniform and rectangular
- Comics adopted all caps for ease of formatting and spacial management in panels
- Examples: Raina Telgemeier's *Smile*, Jennifer L. Holm and Matthew Holm's *Babymouse* series, Kazu Kibuishi's *Amulet* books, and Jeff Smith's *Bone* saga
- All caps makes reading these texts more difficult; understanding this difficulty is necessary for teachers and librarians recommending texts to struggling readers.