



Comics at CU Boulder

Collaborative Research Grant Showcase
January 29, 2026

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Outline for today

1. Overview of project: methods, context, and goals
2. Findings and Preliminary Outcomes
3. Next Steps
4. Time for questions

How could comics and graphic novels be used if we had a more robust collection in the University Libraries, especially to support community connection?


Overview of Project and Methods

- Environmental scan of other library collections
- Reviewed textbook lists from CU Boulder AY24/25
- Compared Libraries' graphic novel collection to awards and recommended book lists, identifying missing titles
- Interviewed instructors about their use of comics
 - How do they use them for research and teaching?
 - Identify specific titles/authors/publishers frequently assigned
 - Their perceptions of Libraries spaces and collections

Context

- Broadly & historically at academic libraries:
 - Collecting comics for leisure reading
 - Past 10-15 years: uptake in collecting comics to align with course materials; growing interest in their specific pedagogical value
- Here at CU Boulder:
 - Noted interest from instructors and students
 - Unique focus among regional peers
 - Starting points:
 - Large donation from alum R.C. Harvey (comics, scholarship)
 - We had some existing digital collections

Existing Digital Collections



Underground and Independent Comics

Underground and Independent Comics
Volumes your library has access to:

- Underground and Independent Comics, Comic, and Graphic Novels: Volume I
- Underground and Independent Comics, Comic, and Graphic Novels: Volume II
- Underground and Independent Comics, Comic, and Graphic Novels: Volume III: The Modern Age

Search inside this collector [Advanced Search](#)

BOOKS / DOCUMENTS 3,477 PAGES 273,922

Browses

Comic Series	Characters	Genres
People	Publishers	Subjects

Featured Content




New! Comic Book Artist

A multi-Eisner Award winner for "Best Comics-Related Magazine", celebrates the lives and works of great cartoonists, writers and editors from all eras through in-depth interviews, feature articles, and unpublished art.



The Comics Journal

The Comics Journal has been a source for comics news and opinion since 1977. It contains in-depth interviews with mainstream, classic, underground, and small-press creators, and covers issues relevant to comics scholars and fans.



The World of Archie Comics Archive

An unprecedented digital collection offering access to the runs of more than 100 publications from Archie Comics. It's one of the longest-running, best-known comic staples, spanning the early 1940s to 2020. Alongside the flagship title, Archie, other prominent titles, which have pervaded wider popular culture, include Sabrina: The Teenage Witch, Josie and the Pussycats, Betty & Veronica, and Jughead.

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BOOKS / DOCUMENTS 7,586 PAGES 324,841

Browses

Comic Series	Characters	Genres	People
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Featured Content



New! Blue Ribbon Comics

Blue Ribbon Comics was the first title published by M.L.J. Magazines, Inc. in 1939. This anthology series covered various genres from science fiction, crime, humor, and adventures tales. It also debuts the first superhero, Bob Phantom, who was a Broadway theater columnist with strength and the ability to teleport.



New! Zip Comics

This anthology series created in 1940 covered various genres from war, mystery, crime, and adventure. Published during WWII, many of the stories focused on American superheroes fighting the Germans and Japanese. The key character featured was Steel Sterling, a chemist who became the "Man of Steel" after dunking himself in chemically treated cauldron of molten steel.



New! Pep Comics

Pep Comics started as a superhero series in 1940. It was where the character Archie Andrews first made an appearance. Later in the 1940's, Archie became the principle character as M.L.J. Comics moved away from superhero stories to focus on teen humor. Many of the stories in Pep

Existing Digital Collections

PETE DUNCAN - "DROPOUT"



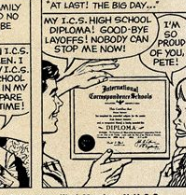
INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS ICS

DEPT. 1637, SCRANTON, PENNA. 18515 (in Hawaii, P. O. Box 478, Honolulu, in Canada, I.C.S. Canada, Ltd., in other countries, I.C.S. World, Ltd.)

Rush me FREE High School completion kit "HOW TO SUCCEED", the high school opportunity booklet about the field I have indicated below, and a sample I.C.S. lesson. (Special booklets for women. Convenient payment plan.)

- High School Business
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- High School Prep
- Engineering & Science
- Send me Success Kit on I.C.S. courses in other fields.
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- High School Math
- High School Secular
- High School Vocational

Name _____ Age _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____
 Occupation _____ Employed by _____ Working Hours _____ A.M. to _____ P.M.
 Last sent me members of U.S. Armed Forces _____ Special training orders for _____
 Pete Duncan is fictional. His story is a composite from the files of I.C.S.



ARE YOU A RED DUPE?



HERE IN AMERICA, WE CAN STILL PUBLISH COMIC MAGAZINES, NEWSPAPERS, SLICKS, BOOKS AND THE BIBLE. WE DON'T HAVE TO SEND THEM TO A CENSOR FIRST. NOT YET...

FOR THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE IN AMERICA WHO WOULD LIKE TO CENSOR... WHO WOULD LIKE TO SUPPRESS COMICS. IT ISN'T THAT THEY DON'T LIKE COMICS FOR THEM! THEY DON'T LIKE THEM FOR YOU!

THESE PEOPLE SAY COMIC BOOKS AREN'T AS GOOD FOR CHILDREN AS NO COMIC BOOKS OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT. SOME OF THESE PEOPLE ARE NO-GOODS. SOME ARE DO-GOODERS. SOME ARE WELL-MEANING, AND SOME ARE JUST PLAIN MEAN.

BUT WE ARE CONCERNED WITH AN AMAZING REVELATION. AFTER MUCH SEARCHING OF NEWSPAPER FILES, WE'VE MADE AN ASTONISHING DISCOVERY:

THE GROUP MOST ANXIOUS TO DESTROY COMICS ARE THE COMMUNISTS!

WE'RE SERIOUS! NO KIDDIN'! HERE I READ THIS:

THE COMMUNIST "DAILY WORKER" OF JULY 15, 1953 SAID THAT COMICS PLAY THE CONSCIOUS ROLE OF:

"... BRUTALIZING AMERICAN YOUTH, THE BEST TO PREPARE THEM FOR MILITARY SERVICE IN IMPLEMENTING OUR GOVERNMENT'S AIMS OF WORLD DOMINATION, AND TO ACCEPT THE ATROCITIES NOW BEING PERPETRATED BY AMERICAN SOLDIERS AND AIRMEN IN KOREA UNDER THE FLAG OF THE UNITED NATIONS."

THIS ARTICLE ALSO QUOTES GERSON LEGMAN (WHO CLAIMS TO BE A GHOST WRITER FOR DR. FREDERICK HEYWARD). THE AUTHOR OF A RECENT BLAST AGAINST COMICS PUBLISHED IN "THE LADIES HOME JOURNAL". THIS SAME G. LEGMAN, IN ISSUES OF "NEUTRICAL", PUBLISHED IN AUTUMN 1948, SAID:

"THE CHILD'S NATURAL CHARACTER... MUST BE DISTORTED TO FIT CIVILIZATION... FANTASY VIOLENCE WILL PARALYZE HIS RESISTANCE, DIVERT HIS AGGRESSION TO UNREAL ENEMIES AND FRUSTRATIONS, AND IN THIS WAY PREVENT HIM FROM REBELLING AGAINST PARENTS AND TEACHERS. THIS WILL SIPHON OFF HIS RESISTANCE AGAINST SOCIETY, AND PREVENT REVOLUTION."

SO THE NEXT TIME SOME JOKER GETS UP AT A P.T.A. MEETING, OR STARTS JABBERING ABOUT THE "NAUGHTY COMIC BOOKS" AT YOUR LOCAL CANDY STORE, GIVE HIM THE ONCE-OVER, WE'RE NOT SAYING HE IS A COMMUNIST! HE MAY BE INNOCENT OF THE WHOLE THING! HE MAY BE A DUPE! HE MAY NOT EVEN READ THE "DAILY WORKER"! IT'S JUST THAT HE'S SWALLOWED THE RED BAIT... HOOK, LINE, AND SINKER!

SABRINA THE TEENAGE WITCH IN A TASTE OF GOLD



HOSTESS AND TWINKIES ARE REGISTERED TRADEMARKS OF CONTINENTAL BAKING COMPANY ©1980 CONTINENTAL BAKING COMPANY

Comic from the "DAILY" Aug.-Sept. 1954-Vol. 1, No. 43 (formerly "DAILY OF TERROR"). Published bi-monthly by I. C. Publishing Co., Inc., at 833 Lafayette St., New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1933. Not to be returned unless accompanied by stamped return envelope. No liability between I. C. Publishing Co., Inc. (Discontinued measurement) will not be returned unless accompanied by stamped return envelope. No liability between any of the characters, names or persons appearing in this magazine with any of those living or dead is intended, and any such similarity is purely coincidental. Printed in U.S.A.

Goals

- Strategic growth of Libraries' collections
- Establish interdisciplinary Libraries collection development policy and funding structure
- Understand campus needs regarding comics and new directions in scholarship and instruction
- Libraries as hub for community interested in comics

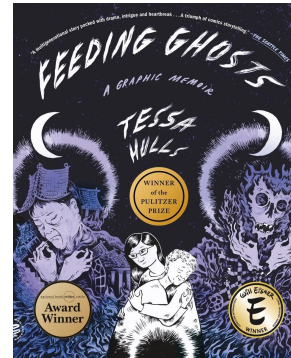
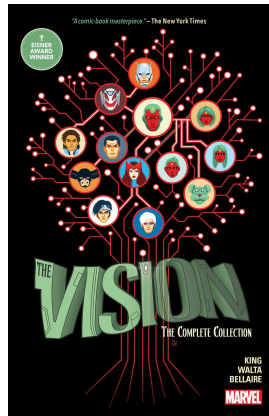
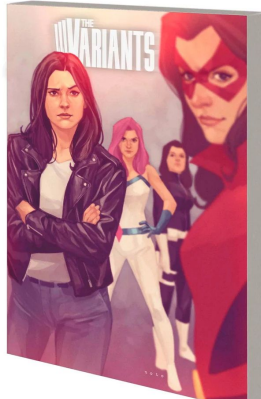
Research Questions

- What titles, creators, and subjects of comics and graphic novels are being taught on campus?
- What publishers, formats, and languages are represented and needed?
- Do the Libraries regularly purchase the titles, creators, subjects, publishers, and formats being taught on campus and if not, how might we begin?
- Do faculty direct students to the Libraries specifically for comics and graphic novels?
- How do students use, or wish to use, comics and graphic novels?
- How could comics and graphic novels be used if we had a more robust collection in the University Libraries, especially to support community connection?

Findings: Collection Gaps

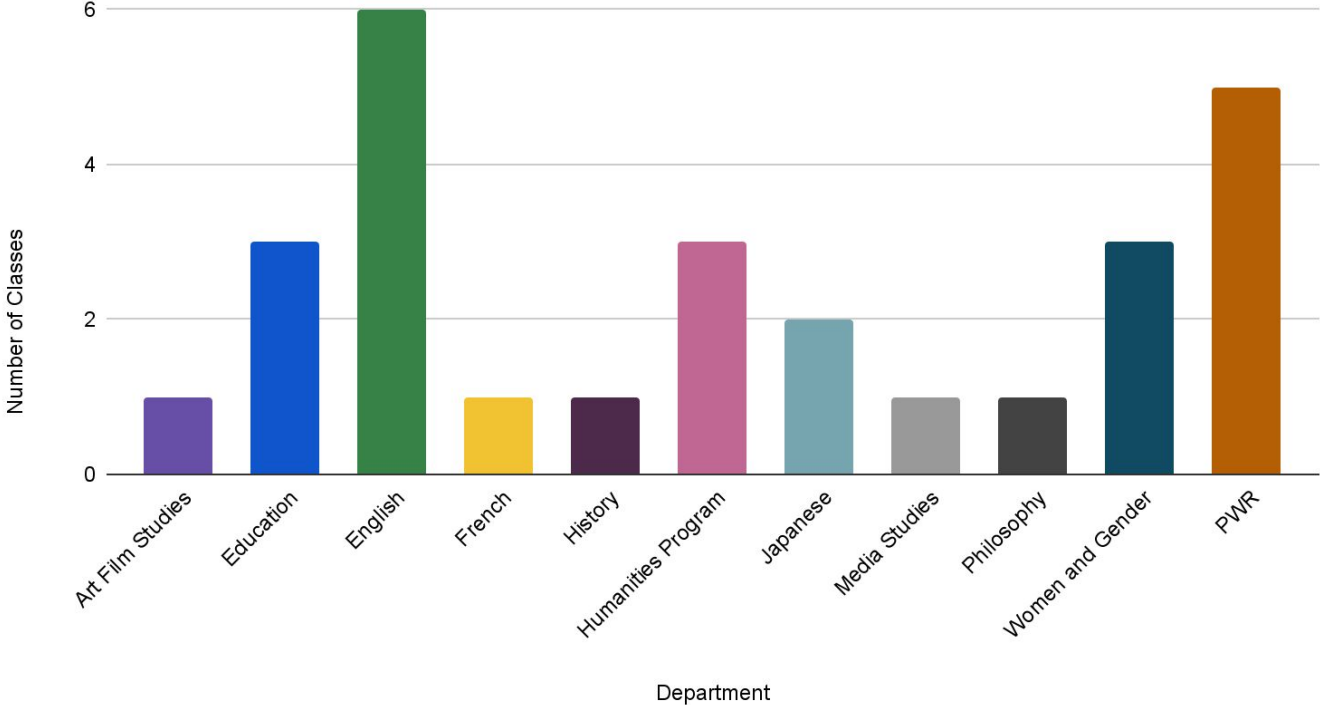
Textbook Lists

- Student Research Assistants Sinjin Green and Khadija Sow reviewed CU bookstore textbook lists, finding 50 unique comic or graphic novel titles being used across campus during Fall 2024 and Spring 2025
- 32 out of 50 titles owned by the Libraries (64%)
 - Physical items shelved across five Norlin locations plus PASCAL
- 27 unique classes, 11 departments or programs reaching 1,383 students



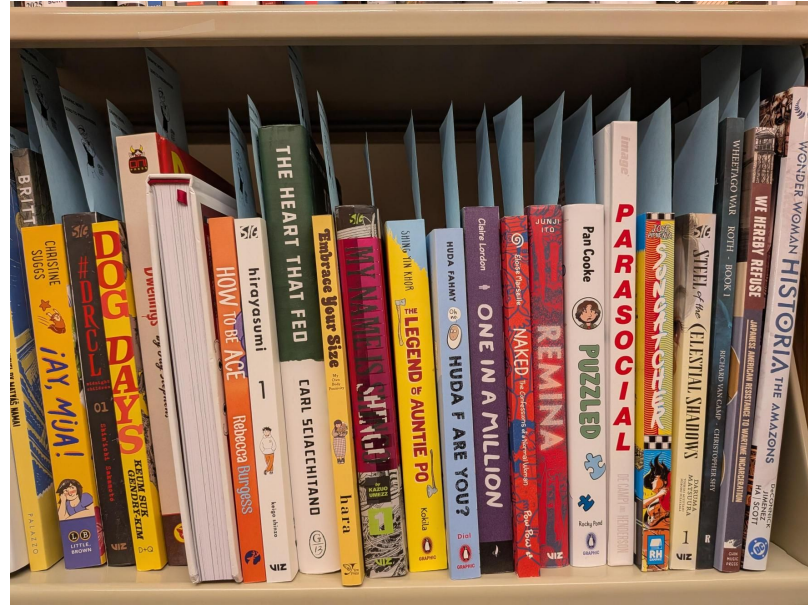
Fall 2024 and Spring 2025 Classes Using Comics

Number of Classes vs. Department



Awards and Recommended Reading Lists

- Analyzed 20 major awards/reading lists (2020–2025) across USA, Canada, France, and Germany
- Selected key categories from the Eisners, Ignatz, Harvey, Ringo, and American Manga Awards
- Evaluated holdings for ~400 titles published since 2020
- Library has 210 of these
 - (125 physical / 85 digital)
- Purchased 165 physical titles



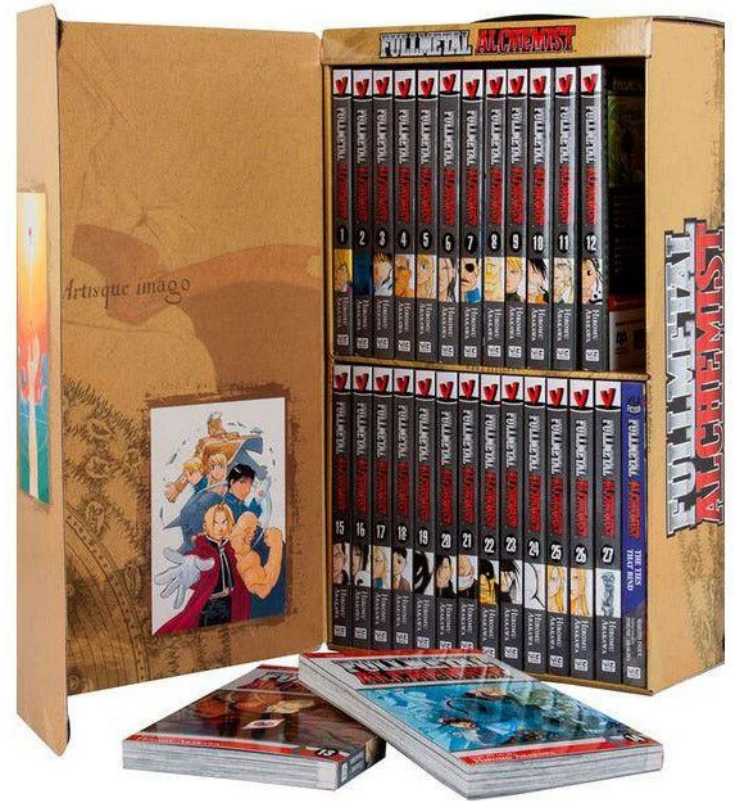
Manga

- Previously Libraries had only 100-200 volumes of manga in English
- Purchased or completed 19 different series
- Added almost 400 new volumes to collections



Manga

- Assassination Classroom, vols. 1-21
- BLAME!, vols. 1-6
- Chainsaw Man, vols. 1-11
- Death Note, vols. 1-13
- Delicious in Dungeon, vols. 1-14
- Demon Slayer, vols. 1-23
- Dragon Ball, vols. 1-16
- Dragon Ball Z, vols. 1-26
- Fruits Basket, vols. 1-12
- Fullmetal Alchemist, vols. 1-27
- My Hero Academia, vols. 1-20
- Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind, vols. 1-2
- One Piece Box, vols. 1-90 (!)
- Ouran High School Host Club, vols. 1-18
- Promised Neverland, vols. 1-20
- Rosario+Vampire, vols. 1-10 & 1-14
- Sailor Moon Box, vols. 1-10
- Sailor V, vols. 1-2
- Tokyo Ghoul, vols. 1-14
- Vampire Knight, vols. 1-19



New: LibraryPass Comics Plus

LIBRARY
PASS

COMICS PLUS

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER CO

Featured

Popular

Just Added

Interests

Publishers

Search Comics, etc.



My Shelf

Account

Home

Popular Titles

Interests

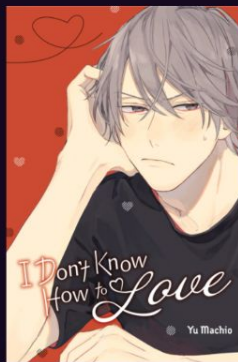
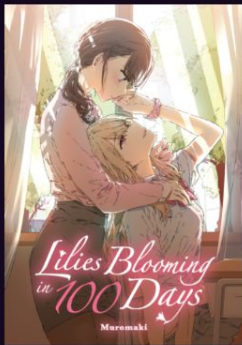
Languages

Publishers

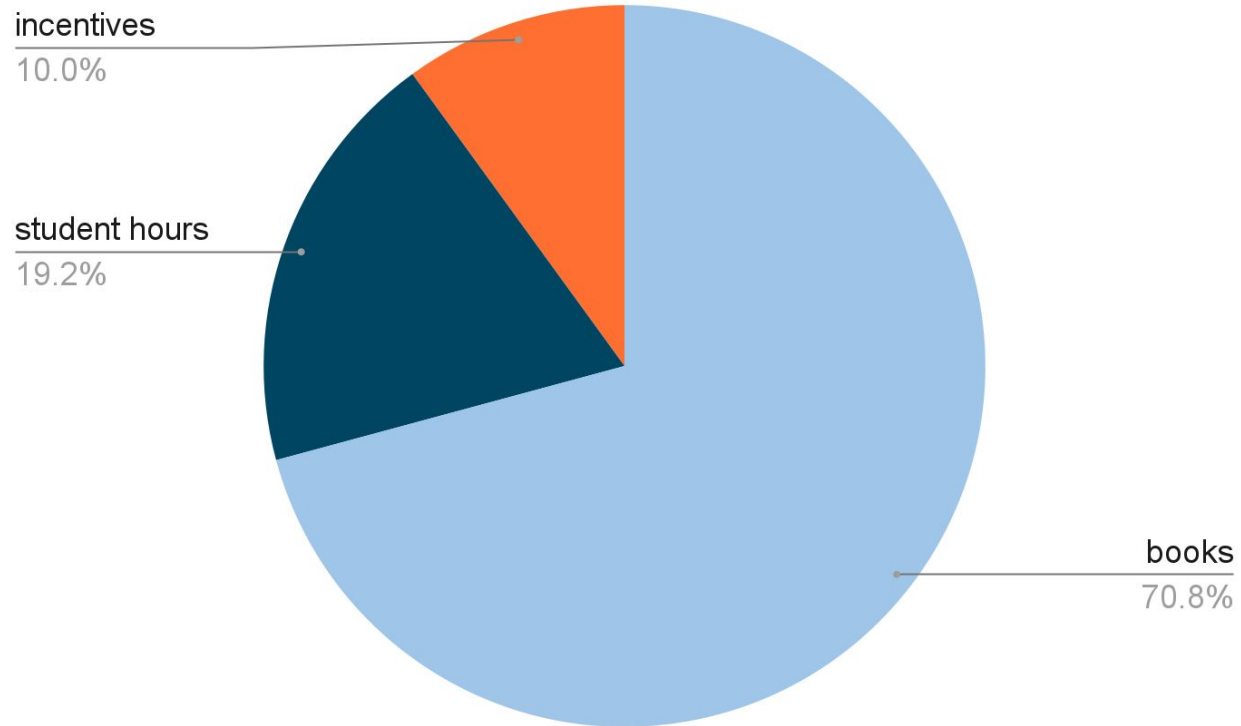
Most Popular

View: 25

Adult



Budget



Findings: Interviews

Instructor Interview Process

- Recruitment of participants and request for syllabi
 - Identified by courses and comics listserv
- Conducted 5 Semi-structured interviews
 - Representation from different departments
- Recorded interviews for transcript analysis

Interview Themes

- Instructors have been teaching with comics for a long time
- Libraries can help reduce student costs by purchasing required texts
- Barriers to using Libraries' resources:
 - Confusion over location, space, where to direct students
 - Unclear on what's available
 - Instructor not knowing they can request materials or services
- Gaps in our collections:
 - Specific publishers, authors, and formats were named

Interview Themes, Continued

- Format preferences:
 - Depends on the purpose
 - For history of the form or as primary sources: print preferred
 - Provides context
 - For teaching content or visual analysis: digital preferred
 - Accessibility
- Instructors value student involvement
 - Interest in displaying student creative work
- Comics is a growing area of scholarship
- Possible comics certificate program

Recommendations and next steps

- Create collection development policy
- Data analysis and publication for research project
- Space considerations
 - Accessible
- Programming for instructors on using comics in the classroom (partnership with CTL?)
- Promote our current collections

Thank you! Questions?

We'd love to talk more comics with you. Contact the team by emailing Matthew at Matthew.Murray-2@colorado.edu

Join the community on campus! Sign up for the Comics at CU listserv at <https://buff.link/m> or at the QR code:



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