The Impact of the 9th Art:
Use of Comic Books & Graphic Novels as a Grey Literature Medium in Post-Secondary Curricula

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GL 17 Amsterdam
December 2015

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words
Arguing Against the 3 Damnations

- Damned as Culture:

    - Comic books/graphic novels are part of popular culture

- Damned as a Medium (neither art nor literature)

    - Comic books/graphic novels seamlessly juxtapose words and pictures; many well known graphic novels are autobiographical or based on true events

- Damned as a Genre (outlandish fantasy)

    - Comic books/graphic novels encompass several genres, gaining widespread acceptance as a literary art form

Comic Books and Graphic Novels
The New Educational Medium

- Promoting literacy via education and communication

  - Diverse, yet related subject fields

- Supportive roles and valuable information sources for caregivers, researchers, teachers, physicians, and beyond

- Simultaneously speak to people with limited education/linguistic barriers

- Portray human condition of suffering/dealing with serious illness or tragedy

Comic Books & Graphic Novels Recognition as Grey Literature

- **The Comic Book Library** formerly recognizes the importance of grey literature as an information medium that goes beyond the written word

- **Image Directories** are recognized by GreyNet as a type of grey literature

- *Unflattening* **by Nick Sousanis** considered the first PhD thesis to be created as a comic book/graphic novel

- **Barnes and Noble** categorizes Russ Kick's *Graphic Canon* under the heading "grey literature Dunagan library"

- **ComicsResearch.org** and **Anime Bibliography** are two among numerous blogs and websites providing ample discussion and references on use of grey literature as a teaching tool among a number of diverse subject areas

Environmental Scan

Use of Comic Books/Graphic Novels among
Post-Secondary Academic Institutions in Canada

- **Background & Purpose**

  - Raising awareness of use of this literary genre in a variety of disciplines in Canadian colleges and universities

  - Converging textual and non-textual (image) seen as new and innovative way to leverage importance of grey literature in the educational realm

  - *Monsterwax*, small privately owned Florida company specializing into turning literary classics (i.e. Jules Verne's *Journey to the Center of the Earth* and *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*) into trading cards

- **Method**

  - Online survey disseminated to 135 lecturers across Canada to elicit their feedback and views on use and impact of comic books/graphic novels in their courses.

Use of Comic Books and Graphic Novels in Post-Secondary Curricula Survey Questions

1. Are comic books/graphic novels part of the curricula within your faculty/department at your institution?

2. If you answered Yes to question #1, please tell us the subject area/discipline that makes use of comic books/graphic novels.

3. What was the reason for the inclusion of a course on comic books/graphic novels within your discipline?

4. Do you feel that comic books/graphic novels are an effective teaching tool within your courses? Please explain.

5. How has the inclusion of courses pertaining to comic books/graphic novels affected enrollment in your faculty/department within your institution?

6. Do you personally conduct research on the use of comic books/graphic novels as an educational medium? Please elaborate.
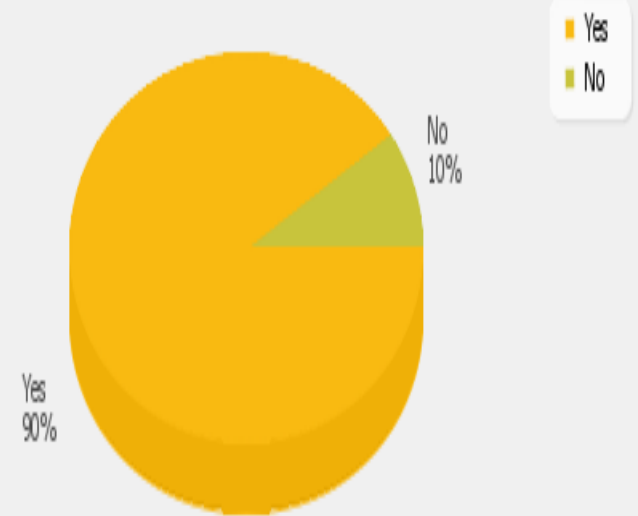
Survey Results

91% of respondents said that comic books/graphic novels are part of the curricula in their faculty/department
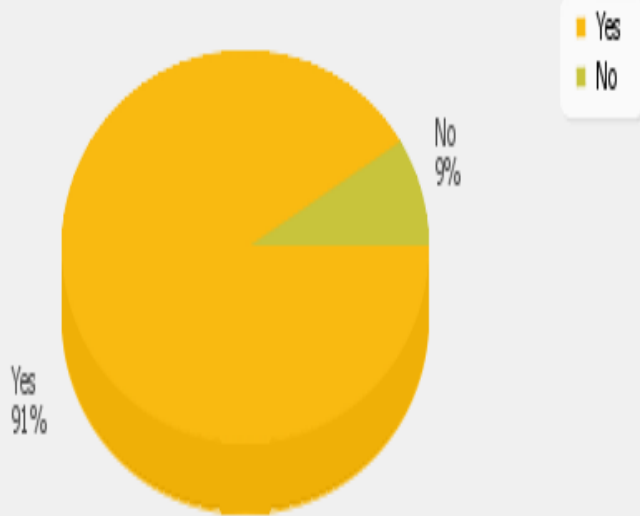
90% of those surveyed believe that comic books/graphic novels are an effective teaching tool

Are comic books/graphic novels part of the curricula within your faculty/de...

- Yes
- No

No
9%

Yes
91%

Do you feel that comic books/graphic novels are an effective teaching tool ...

- Yes
- No

No
10%

Yes
90%

Survey Results
Subject Areas Teaching Comic Books/Graphic Novels

- Education
- Fine Arts
- Religious Studies
- English
- Cultural Studies
- Arts and Education
- Psychiatry
- Art
- Communication, Media
- Centre for Military and Strategic Studies

- Human & Population Ecology
- Modern Languages and Cultures
- Computing Science
- Criminology
- Philosophy
- Biology
- History
- Math
- Anthropology
- Economics
- Social Welfare

Comics/Graphic Novels + Inclusion in Courses = Greater Awareness of Grey Literature

- Need to prepare teachers to share this format with students

- Need to expand exploration of genres

- Need to immerse students in a topic and narrative, enabling them to extract themes

- Need to critically examine media, addressing concerns and representation of race, women, mass media etc.

" comics and graphic novels are themselves forms of literature worth studying in their own terms"

Comic Books and Graphic Novels: Effective Teaching Tools

- Opportunity to transfer textual analysis skills to expand awareness of ways texts create meaning, critical thinking, and ideology

- Opportunity to emphasize content area connections

- Opportunity to understand and what on what is going on within a comic more so than a journal article (comics seen as non-threatening)

- Opportunity to appreciate the complexity of combining image and text to tell stories

"the language of the comic, both in form and content, is part now of the language of the students. To teach comics, or with them, is to teach them in a literature they are influenced by, familiar with in the way casual readers are of the literature they read, and interested in enough to reward further study."

Personal Research into Comic Books and Graphic Novels by Course Instructors

- *How comics reflect socio-cultural context and what that has to communicate about development of religious texts*

- *The comic book format and its relationship with folklore, oral storytelling, and Canadian identity*

- *Breast cancer and comic books, both as an educational tool and as cathartic medicine*

A number of respondents mentioned that they create their own comic books and graphic novels

Questions & References

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