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IS 430
October 31, 2007

Assignment #1 Collection Assessment
Graphic Novels at UCLA College Library

The graphic novels section at the College Library at UCLA was created this summer by pulling the various graphic novels and comic book collections from their respective call number locations in the stacks and placing them together in a special area on the second floor. While fictional graphic novels and comics are classed in the PN6700s, non-fiction works in the graphic novel format are classed according to subject. The librarians at College Library wanted to group anything in the format together for ease of use. The section is now located near the current periodicals and is close to the circulation desk. There are about 200 items in the collection.

Community factors: College Library's primary user community consists of the undergraduate students at UCLA. Graduate students, faculty, staff and others with library cards are free to check out materials. Anyone can use the facilities and browse the stacks. The undergraduate population consists of close to 25,000 students with a slightly higher percent of women enrolled. The average age of undergraduate students is 21. Admission to the university is highly selective and students are well-educated.[1] According to the 2003 LibQUAL+ survey, 58.68% of undergraduates visit the library at least weekly, while 98.2% visit at least once per quarter.[2]

The primary reason for the existence of the graphic novel section is to provide undergraduates with pleasure reading. The graphic novel is a popular format, especially among

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[1] UCLA Office of Analysis and Information Management, "Common Data Set 2006-07," UCLA, http://www.aim.ucla.edu/data/campus/general/CDS2006_2007.pdf.
[2] UCLA Library, "2003 LibQUAL+ Results Report - 2/5/2004: Appendix 5 - UCLA Library Use Data," http://www2.library.ucla.edu/libqual/pdf/LibQualReportFINAL_2.pdf.

young people. Recent graphic novels were originally collected as part of the recent fiction section, which is also for pleasure reading. Of course graphic novels can also be studied for their literary and artistic merits, so the collection may support student or faculty research. Also, many of the graphic titles in the collection are nonfiction and can provide factual information, particularly on historical, cultural and scientific subjects. Currently, however, there are no courses at UCLA that deal directly with the study of comics or graphic novels.

Material usage: As of October 30, 2007, there were 111 items on the shelf with an average copyright year of 2000 and median copyright year of 2004. According to Lise Snyder, who selects the materials, there are about 200 titles in the collection. Pulling ten random books from the shelf and looking at the date stamps, one title had not circulated since 2003, but the others circulated from one to ten times over the last two years, with most circulating about four times. Of course the date stamp is not completely accurate since there is a self-checkout machine at College Library, but items are circulating nonetheless. Some of the books were misshelved or out of volume sequence, which also indicates use. Lise Snyder noted that one of the reasons for separating the graphic novels was the usual disarray of the PN6700s, where many of the items were shelved. Getting exact circulation numbers for section is difficult since the call numbers vary so widely and the system cannot narrow to specific locations within College Library.

Complementary materials: UCLA Libraries have academic works about graphic novels and comics, but they are shelved according to LC call number. Some of these works are at College library, but others are found at the Young Research Library and the Arts Library. In the UCLA catalog, there are two electronic journals that complement the collection: *Image & Narrative: online magazine of the visual narrative* and *Imagetext: interdisciplinary comics studies*. The Arts Library also has a journal called *International Journal of Comic Art*.

Additionally, College Library owns a few complementary encyclopedias in its reference collection including: *World encyclopedia of cartoons, World encyclopedia of comics, Comic book encyclopedia : the ultimate guide to characters, graphic novels, writers, and artists in the comic book universe*, and *The superhero book : the ultimate encyclopedia of comic-book icons and Hollywood heroes*. Users may also be able to find related material in the various online article databases available at the UCLA Libraries. The library does not provide any pathfinders or subject guides for this collection.

Budget: Before separating the graphic novels into their own section, materials were purchased as part of the recent fiction collection or the core collection of College Library. Now, $4,000 is allocated for the year to purchase new and retrospective items. The entire budget for College Library is about $267,000 this year, so graphic novels make up about 1.5% of the total budget. For comparison, the recent fiction collection budget is $6,000. Future budget allocations will depend on the usage of the collection this year.

Selection: Lise Snyder, a reference/instruction librarian at College Library, selects materials for this section in addition to selecting for the rest of the College Library collection (excluding reference materials). She uses a variety of reviewing sources including book reviews in the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, and major library review sources. In addition, she tries to determine major artists and purchases their seminal works as well as the works of their influences. A current edition of the College Library newsletter asks for user suggestions and she plans to place a suggestion box near the section. At the moment she does not purchase manga series, except for a few by major artists, though may consider it if there is demand. It seems that the collection consists of works of higher literary and/or artistic merit or older works that

influence current artists. There do not seem to be many titles that are purely popular works. There is a mix of standalone titles and multi-volume series.

Considerations for future development: Graphic novels are currently being published in greater numbers than ever before and the trend looks to continue for awhile.[3] More quality works are being made, but there will also be more titles from which to choose, making selection more difficult. The popularity of the format may also prompt the publishing of new editions of older titles. There is also more scholarly research being conducted on graphic novels and comics, so it is possible that more students and faculty at UCLA will use the format in their research as well.[4] Since the collection is so new, future budget allocations will depend on the popularity and use of the collection. To increase use of the materials, the library should consider promoting the collection through print and electronic pathfinders, including an easy to browse list of titles held by the library. Librarians can also do outreach to professors who may want to include graphic novels in their courses. Another consideration is the inclusion of serial titles in the collection. The library should not purchase a single volume of a series without committing to buy the entire run of the series. This can be problematic if a series is still in production and there is not set number of titles. The library should consider only purchasing completed titles. There is currently no written collection development policy specifically for graphic novels, so the library needs to create one to deal with issues like quality versus popularity and serials versus standalone titles.

Need for multiple copies: There are very few titles with multiple copies. The only two on the shelf with multiple copies were *Maus* and *Freud for Beginners*, both of which had two copies. While the items in the section do get used, the usage does not really warrant multiples.

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[3] Lorena O'English, J. Gregory Matthews, and Elizabeth Blakesley Lindsay, "Graphic Novels in Academic Libraries: From Maus to Manga and Beyond," The Journal of Academic Librarianship, 32 (2): 175.

[4] O'English, "Graphic Novels in Academic Libraries," 174.

Additionally, College Library has a two-week circulation period, which allows for high turnover and circulation of popular titles.

Retrospective development needs: Based on the average (2000) and median (2004) copyright years, the collection seems to consist of fairly recent titles. There may be some works from the 1980s and '90s that warrant being added to the collection, particularly influential works and older works by current artists. For example, Neil Gaiman's ten-volume *Sandman* is considered a seminal comics series,[5] but the library only owns a newer spin-off title. Based on other bibliographies, including *Graphic Novels: A Bibliographic Guide to Book-Length Comics* and *The 101 Best Graphic Novels* there are definitely holes in the collection that should be filled through retrospective collection development.

Weeding: Since the collection is fairly new, it has not been formally weeded. When pulling titles from their respective call number locations, Lise Snyder made some decisions about what to actually classify as graphic novels for the section. She did not place many collections of cartoons or comic strips in the collection, so those remain in the regular stacks. As of now, there is plenty of space for the collection to expand. Because of the popular nature of the format, many of the books are not bound to withstand heavy library use. Books that fall apart will weed themselves, but should be replaced as necessary. Since the collection includes a lot of quality titles that will probably remain important works of the genre, most of the items are worth keeping around for as long as they continue to circulate and do not fall apart. The most popular titles should be replaced as necessary. Every two years, the selector should evaluate the collection for usage and decide which materials are worth keeping.

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[5] Steve Raiteri, "Suggested Opening Collection: 30 Selections," Graphic Novels for Public Libraries (October 29, 2003), http://my.voyager.net/~sraiteri/openingcoll.htm. Accessed October 30, 2007.

New acquisitions direction: The publication of graphic novels is on the rise—the market quadrupled between 2001 and 2006[6]—so the library should certainly pay close attention to newly published titles in the format by continuing to read current reviews and newly published bibliographies. With its current budget, the library should be able to add well-reviewed current titles as well as to purchase retrospective titles to fill gaps in the collection.

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[6] Heidi MacDonald, "Graphic Novel Sales Hit $330 Million in 2006," PW Comics Week, February 23, 2007, http://www.publishersweekly.com/article/CA6418995.html.

Resources

MacDonald, Heidi. "Graphic Novel Sales Hit $330 Million in 2006." PW Comics Week, February 23, 2007. http://www.publishersweekly.com/article/CA6418995.html.

O'English, Lorena, J. Gregory Matthews and Elizabeth Blakesley Lindsay. "Graphic Novels in Academic Libraries: From Maus to Manga and Beyond." The Journal of Academic Librarianship, 32 (2): 173-182.

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