

Connecting Comics to Curriculum

By Karen Gavigan and Mindy Tomasevich



Many school librarians are witnessing a shift in students' reading habits. It often begins the first time they notice a student reading a book from a cell phone or tablet. Today's students are increasingly accessing computers and mobile devices to meet their personal and informational reading needs. According to the Pew Research Center's Internet Report (2012), 95 percent of all teens between the ages of twelve and seventeen are now online. Much like the explosion of e-books, digital comics and graphic novels have become a format that many young people prefer when they select their reading material.

A digital graphic novel is an online version of the printed format. It can be read on a computer, tablet, e-reader, smartphone, gaming system, or other mobile device. In the last few years, the sale of digital comics nearly tripled, to around \$70 million, or around 9 percent of the total market, from \$25 million in 2011 (ICv2, 2013).

There are different ways to access digital comics. Some are free while others involve a fee. Anyone who has purchased an e-book for a mobile device or downloaded one from a library is already familiar with the process of acquiring a digital comic. Because they don't wear out or become lost,

the purchase of digital comics and graphic novels can be cost-effective for librarians.

When asked why school librarians should include digital graphic novels in their library collections, John Shableski, library program manager for Comics Plus: Library Edition at iVerse Media replied, "Graphic novels, and digital comics, connect readers with stories in an entirely new way. There is such a vast array of subjects and genres now available in the digital space that it creates an entirely new arsenal of tools for the educators to use. Graphic novels are an amazing storytelling tool and, in the digital format, they are an even more immersive reading experience. The added benefit of providing readers the option of accessing graphic novels in a digital environment is that it allows the librarian a tool for testing the level of interest in any book before securing a hard copy for their permanent collections."

So how exactly can librarians add digital graphic novels to their collections? Many of the companies you may already use to purchase books, such as Follett, Ingram, and Mackin, offer both individual digital graphic novel titles and bundled lists. iVerse Comics Plus: Library Edition, a subscription service for libraries that want to purchase digital

comics and graphic novels, offers a wide range of titles. With a selection of over 12,000 comics, graphic novel, and manga titles from popular publishers such as Archie, Andrews McMeel, Papercutz, VIZ, BOOM! Studios, and Archaia, each title is available to an unlimited number of readers. The cost for libraries is about 50¢ per checkout. Libraries have to pay only for titles that circulate, and they can set spending limits to stay within their budgets.

DIGITAL COMICS AND THE COMMON CORE

Common Core State Standards Initiatives include the following statement: "To be ready for college, workforce training, and life in a technological society, students need the ability to gather, comprehend, evaluate, synthesize, and report on information and ideas, to conduct original research in order to answer questions or solve problems, and to analyze and create a high volume and extensive range of print and nonprint texts in media forms old and new" (2010).

References

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